A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON BAPTISM

REV^D J. THOMSON

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THE

NATURE AND IMPORT

OF THE

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM,

AND THE

DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE RECEPTION OF IT.

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PREFACE.

In this Second Edition, several alterations and considerable additions have been made, by which it is believed the Work will be found improved. The practical illustration and enforcement of the subject being the object intended, all controversial matter has been, as much as possible, excluded. It is humbly hoped that, with the Lord's blessing, the Work may be of some use in disseminating clearer views of the nature and import of Baptism, and deeper impressions of the obligations involved in it, than are frequently to be met with among the professing disciples of Jesus.

Montrose, 31st March, 1845.

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

All the arrangements for unfolding and giving effect to the scheme of redemption are full, not only of wisdom, but of amazing condescension and love. Here we find an accommodation to our varied necessities as gracious as it is complete. The peculiarities of our present state are all looked to and provided for. We have a material as well as a spiritual nature—we have a body as well as a soul; and such is the connexion between them, that the latter receives not a few of its most vivid and permanent and fruitful impressions through the organs of the former. Accordingly, to meet this characteristic of our constitution, it has pleased the Lord not only to reveal his will by a written and preached Word, but to embody the more prominent truths of the Gospel in certain material emblems and visible ceremonies, fitted to speak with no ordinary power to the senses. A wider and deeper channel of access to our minds and hearts is thus opened up for these truths; their special importance the more forcibly arrests our attention; their spiritual meaning is written with more indelible characters upon our

understandings and our memories; their practical bearing is brought home to us with more lasting influence.

Of the various rites and ceremonies which, by divine appointment, have been used in the Church, there are none in which we find all this more affectingly realized than those which are peculiar to the Gospel dispensation. Here, indeed, the gorgeous display wherewith Jehovah was pleased to embellish and give effect to his worship under the Old Testament economy is laid aside. The external glory, which solemnized and elevated the soul of the ancient worshipper, has departed with the overthrow of that magnificent temple where it once shone forth; and nothing now appears but the sober garb of unadorned simplicity. Stript though they be, however, of all such outward splendour, the peculiar ordinances of the Gospel are of even superior glory and more impressive power. We behold in them a far clearer and more direct as well as comprehensive exhibition of the truths intended to be set before us; while the circumstances in which they have been instituted clothe them with very special interest. The shadowy types and emblems, through which the Old Testament saints so dimly beheld Messiah and his benefits, here give place to the light in which, under "the ministry of the Spirit that exceedeth in glory," the gospel has been unfolded. By the simpler, yet greatly more expressive, symbols of the New Testament economy, the author, the price, the substance, and the application of all that redemption embraces, are set forth, not only with a loveliness of aspect fitted to move the coldest heart, but with a distinctness which scarcely even the dullest understanding can mistake or misinterpret. Here, too,

the yoke which the burdensome nature, as well as the multitude and variety, of the ancient ceremonial institutions imposed—a yoke which the Apostle Peter tells us neither the disciples nor their fathers could bear—is taken away; and in the two Sacramental Ordinances, easily observed and as easily understood, to which we are now limited, we have at once the illustration and the proof of our Saviour's language, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Nor are we to overlook the deeply affecting circumstances connected with the institution of them. Associated, the one with the horrors of that hour when the powers of darkness were seeking to overwhelm our Lord, and the other with that glory of his ascension, in which, "leading captivity captive," he departed to take his seat at the right hand of God, as the Prince and Redeemer of Israel, they come home to us with unequalled solemnity and interest and practical effect.

What reason then is there not here to bless the Lord for the privilege we enjoy, in having such Ordinances provided for us! And when called personally to observe them, how seriously should we not keep in view their peculiar importance! how intensely should we not desire to enter into their spiritual meaning! how resolvedly should we not strive to fulfil the obligations implied in them! with what believing confidence should we not look for the blessings of which they are the signs and seals! Yet, alas! in not a few cases, they are far otherwise regarded, and far otherwise followed up. While the Sacrament of the Supper is too often either entirely neglected, or observed from the worst of motives, and abused to the worst of purposes, the other Sacrament is as often approached on no better

principles, and with no better result. The former, indeed, is very generally treated with a degree of scrupulous respect, which guards it from being directly or grossly profaned—a respect, however, which, in many instances we fear, must be traced either to superstitious ideas of its nature, or to the most lamentable ignorance of its design. But with regard to the Ordinance of Baptism, the practical illustration and enforcement of which we have here more immediately in view, the very reverse is almost everywhere to be observed. Baptized persons are too apt to lose sight of their own individual concern in it. Forgetting that it has to do, not only with the season of infancy, but with the whole course of their lives, they do not practically recognise it as having brought them within the Covenant whose benefits it signs and seals, and thus bound them over to all which that Covenant embraces and demands. And of parents, in particular, when coming with their children to receive this privilege, may we not point to many who, far from having those serious and holy impressions of its nature and design, which in such interesting circumstances they might be expected to cherish, look upon it as a mere idle ceremony—a practice in itself without meaning or importance, but to be complied with as a thing of course, or as a matter of established custom? Thus its sacredness is trifled with, its spirituality is lost sight of, its value is unheeded; and while the doctrines which it teaches are virtually despised, the blessings also which it exhibits and makes over to genuine believers are in effect rejected, and the important obligations which it involves are neither felt nor acknowledged.

With the desire of doing something to open the

eyes and reach the consciences of those to whom we thus refer, we would here attempt to unfold the nature and import, and to enforce the practical bearing, of this holy Sacrament. Looking to the power of that divine Spirit whose renewing and sanctifying influences the Ordinance so significantly represents, we would humbly hope that, if we shall have the happiness of finding access through these pages to any such, our effort to impress them with sounder views, and bring them under higher and holier principles, may not be lost. Nor can we think it presumptuous to cherish the expectation of being here, through the blessing of the same divine Agent, of some use even to those who not only already understand, but rightly value, and are really under the influence of, all that the Ordinance embraces or requires.

PART I.

THE NATURE AND IMPORT OF BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

BAPTISM IS A SACRAMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BAPTISM is a Sacrament of the New Testament. But what does this mean? What is a Sacrament? and in what respects does Baptism bear this character?

The word "Sacrament" is not to be found in Scripture. It is a Latin word, anciently used to signify the oath whereby the Roman generals and soldiers were mutually bound to faithfulness in all military duty. It is of similar import as applied to the peculiar ordinances of the Gospel—denoting the engagement of Christ to his people, on the one hand, as "the Captain of Salvation," and their engagement to him, on the other hand, as his followers in the Christian warfare. Thus regarded, a Sacrament may be described, in general, as a solemn act, in which Christ and believers are bound, as it were, *by an oath*, to each other, with a view to the accomplishment of the great ends and objects of the Gospel scheme.

1. More particularly, a Sacrament implies *the adherence by the one party to the Covenant of Grace, and the ratification of that Covenant by the other.* This is what constitutes the peculiar distinction between the Sacraments and mere ritual observances or ceremonies. The latter are but external forms, by which we exhibit some particular religious profession, or maintain some fixed order of worship. They may be fitted to cherish many holy impressions, and to produce many desirable effects; but they have no immediate connexion with the communication of gospel benefits: whereas the Sacraments, though equally valuable as badges of the Christian profession, have moreover this greatly more important peculiarity, that the conveyance and acceptance of gospel-grace are annexed to the believing observance of them.

2. Bearing this character, it is obvious that a Sacrament must also be of *divine institution.* All that belongs to the scheme of salvation depends upon the sovereignty of Christ as sole King and Head of the Church. It is his exclusive prerogative to bestow the blessings of that salvation. Apart, therefore, from his direct appointment or express sanction, nothing can be of any value or of any efficacy as a pledge of what thus rests upon his mere good pleasure. So that, to be at all binding, a Sacrament must proceed from himself alone.

3. Thus characterised and appointed, a Sacrament consists essentially of two parts—an *outward material sign,* and an *inward spiritual grace;*—these being, at the same time, accompanied by some *form of words* connecting the one with the other. Without the material sign, a Sacrament

would differ but little from any ordinary act of divine worship—prayer for example, in which we find every other property here referred to. Without the inward grace, it would be a mere shadow, destitute alike of meaning and of substance. And without the connecting form of words, whatever might be their apparent general resemblance, there could be no special recognised relation between the sign and the thing signified.

Now all these properties, which thus belong essentially to what we call a Sacrament, are to be found in the Ordinance of Baptism. There is the mutual adherence by God and his people to the Covenant of Grace. For, if to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost means any thing, it is just a solemn acknowledgment that every one who is thus baptized is the special property of the God of Salvation. It is a public announcement that he looks upon God the Father as his Father, God the Son as his Saviour, and God the Holy Ghost as his Comforter and Sanctifier. And it is, at the same time, an intimation, divinely authorised and assented to, that all the three persons of the Godhead are combined in dispensing the peculiar blessings that belong to the several relations in which, according to the Gospel scheme, they thus stand to redeemed sinners. Here also we have the express command of Christ himself instituting the Ordinance—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations—*baptizing them.*" And then, too, we have the outward material sign—*Water;* the inward spiritual grace—*Christ, with the benefits of his redemption;* and the appropriating or connecting form of words—"*I baptize thee, in the name of the Father and of*

the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Such accordingly are the properties ascribed to this Ordinance in the *Westminster Confession of Faith.* "Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life: which Sacrament is by Christ's own appointment to continue till the end of the world." Confess: chap. 28.

CHAPTER II.

BAPTISM IS A SIGN OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Of the various particulars which might here be brought into view, we select the four following, as comprehending all that this Ordinance teaches or represents: Ingrafting into, or Union with, Christ; Pardon, or freedom from the guilt, of sin; Regeneration, or deliverance from the power and pollution of sin; and Dedication to the service of God in Christ. Of these, Baptism, or "the washing with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," is a SIGN.

1. Baptism is a sign of *Ingrafting into, or Union with, Christ.*

This appears from the language of the Apostle Paul, Rom. vi., 3. "Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized *into* Jesus Christ were baptized into his death;" and also Gal. iii., 27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have *put on* Christ." These expressions very manifestly point to some peculiar connexion between Christ and his people. Nor are we left in ignorance as to the nature of this connexion. The various simili-

tudes employed by the sacred writers when describing it, or alluding to it, give us a very lively idea of its features and properties. Thus—"No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. For we are *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*" Ephes. v., 29, 30. Again, our Lord says to his disciples, "I am the vine,"—observe, not the the root or the stem merely, but the vine, the *whole* vine, root, stem, and branches together,—"I am the *vine*, ye are the *branches.*" John xiv., 5. And, again, we find the Apostle Paul thus following out the same metaphor—"For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree wert *graffed* in among them, and with them *partakest of the root* and fatness of the olive-tree, boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Rom. xi., 16–18.

The idea presented by these descriptions and allusions is just that of real actual *oneness* between Christ and his people; so that whatever Christ is they are, and whatever he has they have. It is a union so complete, that believers, as it were, lose themselves in Christ. Their very natures are the same, even as the head and the members are all one body, and the ingrafted branches constitute but one tree with the root and the stem. And, at the same time, it is a vital union; the same life-giving influence mutually pervading them, even as the same animating blood flows in every limb, and the same nourishing sap ascends to every twig and circulates in every leaf.

Of this union between Christ and his people, Baptism is very strikingly significant. It points to *the way in which it is formed.* For the water here used as an emblem of Christ's blood and Spirit, while reminding us of that work which he finished on the cross, whereby he makes himself over to his people, with all that he is, and all that he has, as the Redeemer of lost souls, no less distinctly brings before us that divine influence by which his people, on the other hand, are disposed and enabled to give themselves up to him as all their salvation. Here, too, we have a striking representation of *the means by which this union is maintained.* For, in the application of the sacramental emblem to the person baptized, we behold that application by the Holy Spirit of the blood of the cross to the believer's soul, in which he receives and realizes Christ as the source and the centre and the substance of his spiritual life, so that he can say with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me.*"

As thus expressive of our Ingrafting into or Union with Christ, Baptism exhibits at the same time, indirectly, but still most impressively, that state of *spiritual death* in which all of us, by nature, are lying. If there be anything more obviously implied than another in this union, it is the absolute dependence of the soul upon Christ for its support. Here, therefore, we have the fact prominently brought up before us, that "the natural man," inasmuch as he stands in no such relation to Christ, must be destitute of all that constitutes or belongs to the life of the soul. He can no more answer or fulfil the great ends of his moral and responsible nature, than the body can exercise its natural functions when severed

from its living head, or the branch can bear its leaves, its blossoms, or its fruit, "except it abide in the vine." In other words, we are here distinctly taught that, while strangers to this peculiar connexion with Christ, we are all, without exception, "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. Baptism is a sign of *Pardon,* or freedom from the guilt, of sin.

Significant of our ingrafting into or union with Christ, Baptism is of course to be regarded as pointing to *all* the blessings connected with, or resulting from, this peculiar relation. More particularly, it denotes the Remission of sins. Of this we have many distinct intimations in the Scriptures. "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*" Acts ii., 38. "Arise and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins.*" Acts xxii., 16. The very symbol itself here employed is expressive of such deliverance of guilt. By no means the least obvious property of water is just its power to extinguish fire. Used, then, as the emblem of the Saviour's blood, it very strikingly exhibits the effect of that blood in quenching the flames of Jehovah's wrath. As a matter of course, the purpose for which Christ's blood was shed is referred to in this use of its sacramental emblem. That purpose, therefore, being the justification of believers, their forgiveness and acceptance with God, in which this justification consists, are here very distinctly brought before us. The application of water to the body, as removing external defilement, not less evidently than emphatically denotes the application of Christ's blood to the soul, as the meritorious cause of the change which takes place in the

state of every sinner when the sentence of condemnation is cancelled, and his conscience is thus cleansed from guilt. Accordingly, we find the sacrifice of the cross repeatedly spoken of under the figure of water, in obvious allusion to its justifying efficacy. Thus, "In that day, there shall be *a fountain* opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *for sin and for uncleanness*." Zech. xiii., 1. "Unto him that loved us, and *washed us from our sins in his own blood*, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Rev. i., 5, 6.

Regarded in this point of view, the Sacrament of Baptism forcibly reminds us of the *condemnation* in which the whole posterity of Adam are involved. It is a distinct admission, on the part of every one to whom it is administered, of the justice of this condemnation in his own particular case. And it clearly implies, at the same time, the believing acknowledgment of the absolute necessity, for himself personally, of an interest in the Saviour's justifying righteousness, wrought out in his obedience unto the death of the cross, as the only means of deliverance from its pressure and its consequences.

3. Baptism is a sign of *Regeneration*, or freedom from the power and the pollution of sin.

To this, also, we have the testimony of Scripture. Throughout the whole Bible we find the work of the Spirit symbolized by the element employed in this Sacrament; and, in not a few passages where his regenerating agency is thus figuratively set forth, the Ordinance of Baptism is very manifestly alluded to, as expressive of it. For example:—

"Then will I *sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Ezek. xxxvi., 25–27. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but, according to his mercy, he saved us by the *washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii., 5*. From such passages, it appears that the Ordinance before us refers to that great work of the Spirit, in which he removes the corruption of our fallen nature, and restores every faculty of the soul to its original tendency and proper exercise;—enlightening our minds with the knowledge of saving truth, quickening our consciences from dead works to serve the living God, renewing our wills, and thus making us obedient to the law of Christ, purifying our affections, and setting them upon "the things that are above;"—in short, "creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Of all this the water used in Baptism is a singularly appropriate emblem. Water cleanses us from external pollution: So does the Spirit of God remove the pollution of sin from the soul. Water subdues the violence of fire: So does the Spirit subdue the fire of fleshly lusts. Water refreshes us when weary: So does the Spirit refresh and comfort us when ready to sink under the burden of

* See also Isa. xliv., 3; John iii., 5; Ephes. v., 25, 26.

sin. Water quenches bodily thirst: So does the Spirit relieve us when "thirsting after righteousness." Water fertilizes the earth, and helps our food to nourish us: So does the Spirit produce in the minds and hearts of believers "fruit unto holiness." And even as water is necessary for all, and free to all, so "except a man be born of the Spirit, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God:" while all, without exception, are invited to "come and take the water of life *freely*."

Thus emblematical of what is called in Scripture the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," Baptism very distinctly brings before us our natural state of *spiritual degeneracy*. Looking here to the renovating agency of the Holy Ghost, we cannot but behold, at the same time, the depravity itself, from the evils of which this agency relieves the soul. Of course, therefore, if there be meaning in the reception of this holy Sacrament, it implies the realizing sense of these evils, and the profession of earnest desire to escape from their prevalence, their danger, and their fruits.

4. Baptism is a sign of *Dedication to the service of God in Christ*.

This is involved in the very nature of the blessings themselves, of which, as we have seen, the Ordinance is significant. To be united to Jesus, justified by his blood, and regenerated by his Holy Spirit, essentially imply being given up to Jehovah as the God of Salvation. Nay, it is plainly intimated, by the very words themselves here used to express the relation of the sign to the thing signified. Baptizing "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" obviously connects

the party thus baptized with the different persons of the Godhead, as bearing the specific characters and particular relations which these names denote. Of course, then, in observing the Ordinance, we just proclaim our assent to this connexion, and thereby very manifestly commit ourselves to all that, in these characters and relations, the persons of the Godhead are engaged in working out for us, or entitled to require from us. So that here there is a distinct acknowledgment of our relation to the Father as his redeemed children, bound by every tie of gratitude as well as of duty to love and honor and obey him. Here also we intimate our connexion with the Son as Mediator of the New Covenant, recognising him specially as—our Prophet, to teach us—our Priest, to expiate our guilt, and to intercede for us—and our King, to protect us, and rule over us. And thus, at the same time, we declare our dependence on the grace of the Holy Ghost, as applying to believers the benefits of redemption. So that being baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" is equivalent to declaring that we are devoted or consecrated to the faith and worship and service of the blessed Trinity, as revealed by the Gospel.

CHAPTER III.

BAPTISM IS A SEAL OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

WHILE symbolically representing the blessings of the New Covenant, this Ordinance is at the same time a SEAL of these blessings. The term *seal* is applied by the Apostle Paul to the initiatory rite of the Old Testament dispensation. He tells us that "Abraham received the sign of Circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." The propriety of its being also applied to the initiatory rite of the New Testament dispensation is evident from the fact, that the latter now occupies the place of the former. This fact has been disputed. It may be proper, therefore, here to state the substance at least of the argument respecting it.

The substitution of Baptism under the New Testament dispensation for Circumcision under the Old, is to be inferred from the identity of the Abrahamic Covenant with the Covenant of Grace, to which they are severally appended as seals. That these Covenants are really the same appears from the reasoning of the Apostle Paul, in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians. His

object there is to defend and enforce the doctrine of justification by faith. For this purpose he refers to the particular case of Abraham, whose belief was "accounted to him for righteousness;" and proceeds to show that all who have the like faith stand on precisely the same ground, and participate in exactly the same spiritual blessings,—in other words, they are included under, and have an interest in the promises of, that very Covenant according to the terms of which the Patriarch himself was thus accepted by God. It is most satisfactorily argued that this Covenant could not have been superseded by the subsequent giving of the Law, seeing that, were its blessings to depend in any degree on the condition of personal obedience, the promise given to Abraham would be altogether without effect for securing these blessings to his spiritual seed. "And this I say, that the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For, if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Gal. iii., 17, 18. After stating that the law, though altering nothing as to the way of reconciliation with God, was notwithstanding of peculiar importance as "a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," the Apostle, at the close of the chapter, goes on to declare, as the conclusion obviously pointed to in this passage, that all who are the children of God by faith are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And surely if, in all this, there be any thing more plainly set forth than another, it is just that the Abrahamic Covenant is still as much

in force as ever, and that it is as placed under this very Covenant that believers are now, and ever have been, "blessed with faithful Abraham." From this conclusion, indeed, it would be somewhat difficult to escape, even though we had nothing else to guide us than the statement that the Covenant in question "was confirmed before of God in Christ."

The Abrahamic Covenant being thus identified with the Covenant of Grace, Circumcision and Baptism, by obvious consequence, belong to the same Covenant. Of course, therefore, having the same relation to that Covenant, the latter must now be regarded as occupying the place of the former, which it has long since superseded. Such, accordingly, seems to be the bearing of the language addressed by the same Apostle to the Colossians. "In whom, also, ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. ii., 11, 12. Here the expression "buried with him in baptism," is unquestionably intended to explain "the circumcision of Christ," as now superseding "the circumcision made with hands." And surely it needs little penetration to see that this illustration is altogether pointless, unless the Ordinance of Baptism has really been substituted for Circumcision.

It thus appears that Baptism occupies, under the New dispensation, the place of Circumcision under the Old. Of course, then, they are to be regarded as substantially the same Sacraments, occupying the

same place, answering the same ends, having the same spiritual import and bearing. With equal propriety, therefore, is the term *seal* to be applied to both.

1. Baptism, then, is a SEAL of the Covenant of Grace.

To perceive in what respects it bears this character, we have only to consider the common practice (whence the name is manifestly derived) of affixing a seal to any legal instrument or document. The use of the seal is just to show that the writing to which it is attached is the actual genuine deed of the person who owns the seal, and thus to furnish a pledge or guarantee for his fulfilment of all that is therein expressed or described. Now, Baptism in like manner is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, inasmuch as it is a solemn pledge of adherence to that Covenant on the part of those entering into it—God, on the one hand, thereby engaging to bestow its benefits upon all who are interested in Christ's finished work; and the people of God, on the other, thus also binding themselves to embrace the offer of these benefits, in the way of submission to the merits of Christ as alone securing them, and to the Spirit of Christ as alone administering and applying them.

This engagement, on the part of *God*, is implied in the very nature of Baptism, as emblematical of the manner in which he has secured and made over to his people the blessings of the Gospel. Exhibiting the great truth, that he has "not spared his own Son, but delivered him up" to death for lost souls, it clearly and emphatically proclaims his determination assuredly to convey these blessings to all for

whom they are designed. Doubtless, the promise of God connecting the attainment of them with the exercise of faith in Christ, of itself insures them to all true believers. But in gracious condescension to our weakness, this promise is here sensibly confirmed—its truth being thus more forcibly impressed upon us, its ultimate fulfilment more clearly set before us, its practical influence more effectually brought home to us.

That this Ordinance implies the corresponding engagement on the part of *man*, is plainly taught in Scripture. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into *his death?* Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Rom. vi., 3–6. The Apostle's object here is manifestly to shew, that as Baptism points specially to the death of Christ, so, in receiving it, we acknowledge and intimate our fellowship with him, in reference to the work which he thus finished on the cross—a fellowship which not only implies participation in the benefits flowing from the death thus endured, but supposes conformity to the obligations connected with its nature and design. Now, the death of Christ has for its end and aim just to abolish sin. By the very act, therefore, of being baptized into this death, not only do we acknowledge that we belong to Christ, as bought with the price of his

own blood, but we point to this precious blood as our refuge from the condemning power of sin, and commit ourselves to its influence, as intended to deliver us from the dominion, and to cleanse us from the pollution of sin. So that, in receiving this holy Sacrament, we just engage to follow out the grand object of the Saviour's finished work—taking Him alike for justification and sanctification; that, even as he died *for* sin, we also may die *unto* sin, and as he rose again from the dead, we also may rise with him and walk with him in newness of life.

Here, however, there is a distinction of very great importance to be kept in view. A covenant between man and man is a transaction into which the two parties may enter or not as they please; while, at the same time, the obligations under which it brings them are of no authority independent of the mutual agreement implied in the transaction itself. Of course, therefore, both parties must be equally engaged in it, else it is no covenant at all. By both, too, it must be attested and ratified, otherwise it can be binding upon neither. It is altogether different with the Covenant of Grace. It is not merely because we assent to this Covenant that we are bound to conform to its terms. These terms are binding upon us, *in virtue of the divine authority, and by reason of the divine command.* It is enough, therefore, to bring us under the obligation of this Covenant that God himself has set the seal to it. Properly speaking, we are not left at all to our own discretion in the matter. Our refusal thus to ratify the deed does not exempt us from the engagement to which it refers, and will not save us from the consequences of being unfaithful to that engagement.

"The seal of this Covenant is not set by us, but by God upon us; and that whether we voluntarily comply with its terms or not."* So that Baptism, as a seal thus set by God himself to the Covenant of Grace, while it guarantees the blessings of salvation to those who believingly embrace that Covenant, binds all, without exception, who receive it, to comply with its terms, *whether they recognise its authority or no.*

2. But while Baptism is thus a seal of the Covenant of Grace—in other words, a visible pledge for the fulfilment by God on the one hand, and believers on the other, of what that Covenant embraces —we must beware of supposing that all who receive it are thereby *regenerated* or "born again."

That this Sacrament, when properly administered, actually brings the soul under the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost, is the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Not a few, likewise, among the several denominations of Protestants seem to be of the same opinion. Hence it is, that by that Church, and by all who thus far agree with her, the absolute necessity of Baptism for salvation is maintained and taught. Here also we have the obvious cause of the dislike to the idea of children dying unbaptized, or remaining so beyond the usual period, which is felt or expressed by many others who do not positively avow the doctrine. It is manifestly at variance, however, both with fact and with Scripture.

It is at variance with *fact.* Just look to the conduct of baptized persons. Tried by this scrip-

* Dwight's Sermons: Where this view of the matter is appealed to, very successfully we think, in defence of Infant Baptism.

turally authorized test of their spiritual state, by far the greater proportion are as unrenewed and unsanctified as if there had been no such thing as Baptism at all. Nay, even of those to whom this Sacrament was administered by the Apostles themselves, not a few are declared by the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Word, to be among the reprobate. Simon Magus was baptized; yet does not the Apostle Peter say to him—"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Every succeeding age of the Church furnishes a multitude of similar examples. Nor is there any Christian community, however pure in doctrine or strict in discipline, among whom such examples are not continually to be found.

It will not do to allege that in such cases there has been a falling away from the grace communicated in Baptism. We have ample ground for maintaining the impossibility of any such thing. However keenly disputed by many, both our Lord and his Apostles Paul and John distinctly tell us that no real disciple, no truly regenerated person, ever shall thus fall from grace. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath *everlasting* life, and shall *not come into condemnation,* but is passed from death unto life." John v., 24. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Philip. i., 6. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for *his seed remaineth in him:* and he cannot sin," (impenitently that is, so as to be finally lost,) "because he is born of God."

1st John iii., 9. But, not to insist upon this, it is notorious that there are multitudes whose progress, from the very instant of their baptism down till the latest period of their lives, discovers nothing whatever of the renewed heart—multitudes who give no evidence at all of conformity to the image of Jesus, over whom sin still holds its uncontrolled dominion, who live without God and die without hope.

Nor is the opinion before us less at variance with *Scripture*. Several passages, indeed, are referred to as authorizing it. Among others, we have the language of our Lord to Nicodemus—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This language, however, is far too vague in its bearing upon the point disputed, satisfactorily to decide the matter. It might be questioned whether the Ordinance of Baptism is here spoken of at all. But, admitting this to be the fact, then, to be "born of water" and to be "born of the Spirit" must be regarded as here intended to be distinguished from each other. For if this be not the case—if the two expressions be identical or synonymous—then to be born of water here means *essentially* and *exclusively* to be born of the Spirit, and of course, therefore, cannot be understood to denote the Ordinance of Baptism. On this supposition, then, (viz., that Baptism is here referred to,) to be born of water and to be born of the Spirit are different things. Nor can any immediate or essential connexion between them be inferred from the phraseology thus employed. The use of such figurative language by our Lord may, for anything that appears to the contrary, be intended simply to intimate that, as none can be admitted into the *visible* Church except by passing

through its initiatory rite—Baptism with water—so none become members of his *invisible* kingdom, or, in other words, are admitted into the true Church apart from the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Equally inconclusive are those passages where God is spoken of as "saving us by the washing of regeneration," and where Christ is said to "sanctify and cleanse the Church with the washing of water by the Word." These, if pointing to Baptism at all, are mere figurative expressions, drawn from this Ordinance viewed simply as an emblem of renewing grace. Nor do we find anything more decisive in our Lord's declaration (also very frequently appealed to)—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." So far, indeed, from supporting the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, this passage seems to have little force, and as little consistency, when not understood to be directly opposed to it. Observe, it makes the exercise of true faith essential to the salvation *even of the baptized;* while, in speaking of final condemnation, it refers not at all to Baptism as having anything to do with it—nay, it expressly declares that the unbeliever, *whether baptized or not,* shall be lost. If, therefore, we can learn anything at all from this passage, it is clearly that the redemption of Christ's people depends, not upon their Baptism, but upon the reality of their faith.

Nay, but the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is expressly *denied* in Scripture. We find the Apostle Peter thus expressing himself—"The like figure whereunto even Baptism doth also now save us *(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,* but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. iii., 21.

Does not this language very plainly teach us to look for salvation, not to the outward ceremony of Baptism—not to the washing with water—but to the inward grace, of which it is the emblem? And seeing that the previous existence of this inward grace is essential to the scriptural observance of that ceremony, it cannot, in the very nature of the thing, be its effect or its fruit. The same conclusion is manifestly to be drawn from the practice of the Apostles, when administering the Ordinance. In every case of adult baptism which the sacred narrative brings before us, faith in Jesus Christ and repentance toward God were required as indispensable qualifications for the reception of this Christian privilege. These, therefore, must of course have been regarded by the Apostles as needed *previous* to the administration of Baptism, and, by obvious consequence, not as accompanying it, or flowing from it.

PART II.

THE DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE RECEPTION OF BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUTIES OF BAPTIZED PERSONS IN GENERAL.

If there be any thing more distinctly brought out than another by the view which has been given of the nature and import of Baptism, it is just that those alone who belong to the true Church of Christ have any warrant to observe it. It presupposes the actual connexion of the party baptized with Jesus Christ—expressly requiring, in the case of Adults, the existence of saving faith; and distinctly implying, in the case of Infants, that in virtue of descent from Christian parents, they are in the Covenant, and on that ground entitled to the privilege. Of course, therefore, Baptism is not a *converting* Ordinance. It is not intended to be used, and cannot be lawfully used, by any one for such a purpose. Nay, those who venture to claim for themselves, or to put upon their offspring, this token of the Covenant, while conscious that their own souls have experienced no saving change, only profane the Ordinance, and thus expose both themselves and their families to the wrath of that jeal-

ous God who expressly declares, not merely that he "will by no means clear the guilty," but that he "visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

But, though not to be used as an instrument of conversion, Baptism is of very special value as a means of enlightening and sanctifying grace. As such, accordingly, all baptized persons are bound to improve it. In neglecting to do so, we not only lose many precious advantages intended to be derived from it, but we cast dishonor upon its great Author, pour contempt upon the Covenant of which it is the sign and seal, and practically disown the obligation to serve the Lord which it involves. Yet, alas, there are multitudes by whom the duty of thus improving their Baptism is never thought of, or attended to. This, in some cases, seems to arise from lamentable ignorance of the nature and uses of the Ordinance. Beholding in it nothing but a mere idle ceremony, usual and fashionable, they know not why, in Christian lands, they give themselves no trouble to ascertain its original design, and care very little about any particular purpose it may have to serve. Others, again, have no adequate conception of what it is to be a real disciple of Jesus; and accordingly, losing sight of the spiritual blessings implied in, or conveyed by, the inward grace of which Baptism is the sign, they value and observe the Ordinance as nothing more than a convenient method of solemnly and publicly announcing the person baptized to have been made a Christian. Then there are not a few who, though they have something like scriptural views of the import of Baptism, and something like the knowledge of what it is intended to convey to believers, yet, having no

personal experience of regenerating grace, neither value nor desire the spiritual blessings of the Covenant to which it points; and, giving themselves no concern therefore about their own individual interest in that Covenant, never seek to realize the privileges to which, as its seal, this Ordinance introduces them, or to follow out the duties to which in this character it binds them.

There is reason to fear that all this is realized, more or less, in regard to the greater number of professing Christians. Is such the case with you? Then we would most earnestly and affectionately implore your serious, self-applying, prayerful consideration of what we have now to set forth, as incumbent upon all who have received this holy Sacrament of Baptism.

1. We have to remind you that when privileged to witness the administration of this Ordinance to others, *you are not to be regarded as a mere unconcerned spectator.*

This, alas, seems to be the impression of not a few. They either do not think it worth their while to attend to the service at all, or, if they regard it as in any degree important or interesting, they never look upon themselves as having any personal or particular connexion with it. Beware of the folly, the guilt, the danger, of thus treating this holy Sacrament. Doubtless you are not so deeply concerned in it as the individual to whom at the time it is being administered. But, still, every part of the outward service, as it passes on such occasions before you, has a bearing upon your own state and circumstances, as having once for all occupied the same prominent place in it. You cannot

listen to the profession of faith then made in your hearing, without being reminded of all that you are expected to be and to do, as called by the name, and claiming the privileges, and cherishing the hopes, of a disciple of Jesus. You cannot look upon the water, used in the service to represent the blood and Spirit of Christ, without beholding the guilt that has ruined yourself, for which that blood is the needed atonement, and the sin that pervades and pollutes your own soul, for the removal of which the grace of that Holy Spirit is provided. You cannot join in the prayer then offered up, for the divine presence and countenance and blessing, without feeling and acknowledging the necessity in your own case, no less than in the case of all to whom the Ordinance is dispensed, of that Baptism with the Holy Ghost to which it specially points. You cannot hear the names of the persons of the Godhead, then so solemnly pronounced, without being called to consider your own particular dedication to the service of that glorious Godhead implied in the similar administration of the Ordinance to yourself. And surely, with all this so impressively brought home to you, it cannot but be your duty on every such occasion, not only to take a deep interest in the solemnity, but to mix yourself up with the service—to enter personally into all that the Ordinance can be understood to suggest or imply.

When present, then, at the Baptism of others, seek to realize the design of your own Baptism, and set yourself with all seriousness to enquire whether and how far that design has been fulfilled. Looking to that faith in Christ, the reality of which, and the manifestation of whose practical

power, are implied, if not specified, as the warrant for dispensing and receiving this Sacrament, cherish for yourself this believing, appropriating view of saving truth, apart from which your own Baptism must be useless and vain. When supplicating on behalf of the person to be baptized the outpouring of divine grace to make the Ordinance effectual, see that you cast yourself upon the same divine grace as not less essential to your own experience of its efficacy. Reminded by the water used in the service, at once of the sin that condemns and pollutes the soul, and of the remedy wherewith the Gospel has met its evils, take home to yourself the humbling impression of your own ruined state as a sinner, let your thoughts be occupied with the preciousness of the Saviour's cross, look with real deep concern upon your own personal interest in its pardoning and cleansing virtue, and commit yourself with believing confidence to the grace of the Holy Ghost, to whose work, as applying the benefits of the great salvation, the whole service specially points. Considering, also, that solemn engagement to which, in witnessing the service, your attention is drawn, whereby the person baptized is devoted to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, let the consciousness of the obligation under which all who receive the privilege are thus specially laid, take possession of your own mind and heart; and, confessing in shame and in sorrow your past shortcomings in regard to them, and adoring the goodness wherewith the Lord bears with such unsteadfastness in his Covenant, and the faithfulness wherewith he is still, notwithstanding, mindful of its provisions and its promises, be resolved henceforth, in the strength of his own grace,

more heartily to love, to honor, and to serve him as the God of the Covenant.

2. The fact that you have been baptized ought to influence your *general* character and conduct.

It is not only when witnessing the dispensation of the Ordinance to others that you are called to improve your Baptism. It has a practical bearing on your whole progress. It has a lesson suited to every variety, whether of your spiritual state or of your external circumstances. Wherever you are, and wherever you go, it speaks to you alike of privileges to be realized, and of duties to be performed. According to the manner in which you deal *habitually* with the obligations under which it lays you, so must it prove to your soul "the savour of life unto life" on the one hand, or "the savour of death unto death" on the other. You cannot, therefore, with safety lose sight *at any time* of what the Ordinance implies, or innocently refuse *in any case* to carry out into practice what the observance of it may be understood to prescribe or involve.

Are you as yet UNCONVERTED?—conscious that you have never really come to Christ, never really experienced a change of heart? Then look to your Baptism, and read in it the lesson of deep humiliation before God, and hear in it the call to flee without delay to the Gospel refuge. By this holy Sacrament, you have been specially devoted to God —solemnly given up to be his, his only, his wholly, his for ever. The Covenant to which you have thus been made a party remains in all its binding power over you. The unchanging God has set his seal to the deed. Whether, therefore, you acknow-

ledge its authority or no, his counsel concerning it must stand for ever. Has he not said expressly—"My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips"? Practically, then, to disown the Covenant, and live as if you felt not its obligations, and cared not for its privileges, can only stamp you with the character and mark out for you the doom of a rebel against the great King and Head of the Church, with which, by this Sacrament, you have become externally connected. Think of this, then, and let it impress you with the awfulness of being still "alienated from the life of God"—still under the power of that "carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

The application of the outward symbol of this Ordinance brings home to you, in all its deeply affecting interest, not only the great sacrifice of the cross, but the necessity of real, vital, personal union with Him who offered it, ere the sinner can come within reach of its justifying and cleansing virtue. And can you shut your eyes to the fact here staring you in the face, that refusing to take Jesus home to your hearts, and give him a place in your believing regard, you are just casting away all the peace and hope of which, in Baptism, you have received the token? Think of this, then, and let it remind you of the folly, the guilt, and the danger of your unbelief.

As baptized persons, you have been brought into the closest of external connexion with Christ—drawn as near to him as the outward privileges of the Church imply or can effect. And the very sacramental emblem itself by which this external relation has been formed, carries home to you the

brightest manifestation of the Saviour's love, and lays at your feet the richest offers of his grace—speaking to you of the blood which he shed to make his people his own, of the freeness of its saving power, and of the fulness of the blessings it has purchased and secured. Looking, then, to the hardness of heart wherewith, even amid the experience of this, you are repelling the Saviour, and shutting your ears to the Gospel call, oh, is there no charge of ingratitude here standing against you? and do you find no reason to wonder at the forbearance and long-suffering wherewith the Lord still, in spite of it all, permits you to bear his name, and keeps you under the sound of his Gospel, and within reach of his mercy? Let the consciousness of such ingratitude cover you with shame. Let the experience of such loving-kindness melt you down into that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation."

Here, too, your attention is most impressively drawn to that great spiritual change experienced by all, without exception, who have any part or lot in the Gospel salvation. This Ordinance speaks to you of that "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" whereby the sinner is made like unto Christ, becomes a child of God, and receives "an inheritance among them that are sanctified." The very thought of your Baptism, then, if you attach to it any meaning at all, must bring up before you the melancholy contrast of what you still are, with what, as thus plainly intimated, baptized persons ought to be. The change here referred to has not yet been experienced by you. Notwithstanding the profession made or implied in your Baptism, that you have renounced the

world, the devil, and the flesh, you are giving no evidence of the sincerity of such a profession. There is still no difference between you and those who cling to that world as their portion—making its god their idol, and "serving divers lusts and pleasures." You are still as deplorably enslaved by the power, and given to the practice, and degraded by the pollution, of sin, as if the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, to which this Sacrament points, were a fable or a dream. You are thus very significantly taught, and very solemnly reminded, that you are still, in spite of having received the outward token of the Covenant, nay, in the very midst of all the external privileges you now consequently enjoy, truly "without God," without Christ, and "without hope in the world." O! then, will you not listen to the warning here brought home to you?—will you not give way to the humbling and alarming conviction with which it is fitted to smite you?—will you not, in deep concern about the state of your soul thus opened up to you, cry for converting grace, and plead with God to make you as really as you are professedly his own, so that you may be put into full possession of all the blessings which the holy Sacrament of Baptism signs and seals to the believer?

Perhaps you are a CONVERTED person—a real disciple of Jesus. Well, then, look to your Baptism, and behold in it the means of stimulating, strengthening, and comforting grace. There is nothing that can belong to you as a good soldier of Jesus—nothing that can befal you in the Christian warfare—with regard to which the consideration of your baptismal engagements may not, and ought

not, to influence your progress and direct your conduct. To you this Sacrament is really what it is intended to be, not only the acceptance on your part, but the solemn ratification on the part of God, of that Covenant wherein he has graciously bound himself to make over to you, and through which he is actually conveying to you, all the blessings of salvation. Considering, then, the undeserved mercy thus experienced by you, as contrasted with the melancholy circumstances of those who are still "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," O can you resist the call for deep, unfeigned, overflowing gratitude? Having thus "remembered you in your low estate, and redeemed you from your enemies," and made you his own, O surely the God of the Covenant may well demand your whole heart? You can never do enough to show your sense of such amazing grace and love. With the seal of God thus stamped upon you, not only have you a louder call to serve him, but every thing that tends to displease or to dishonor him takes a deeper die, and wears a more hateful aspect, when said or done by you. So that the aggravation with which, in your particular circumstances, every sin is clothed, may well make you shrink even from the appearance of evil. Hardly, then, can you have a better safeguard against the love and the practice of iniquity, than the constant, cherished, realizing sense of what thus distinguishes you. With this, accordingly, you are bound to meet all that can ever come between you and what you owe to God. In whatever form *temptation* may assail you, here is the weapon wherewith it is to be resisted and overcome. Shall those who are bound by such an awfully so-

lemn engagement to be the Lord's, ever give themselves to another master? Shall those who are thus members of the body of Christ ever yield themselves as "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin"? Shall those who are thus privileged to be citizens of the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory, ever devote themselves to the trifling pursuits, or care for the empty joys, of earth and sense?

As a "soldier of Jesus," you are engaged in *the warfare with Satan.* When exposed, then, to the assaults of the Evil One, and ready to comply with his vile suggestions, bear in mind that the Lord has an exclusive right to you as a baptized person; that so you may be stimulated to steadfastness in your allegiance to him, and strengthened to repel the wicked adversary who seeks to draw you away from him. Or, when wounded by the fiery darts of the Evil One, and ready to sink under the many discouragements he is ever throwing in your way—in the view, for instance, of the multitude and aggravation of your sins, yielding to despair, or filled with unbelieving doubts and fears—cherish the thought that the blood of sprinkling, which, as denoted by its sacramental emblem, has been applied to your soul, "cleanseth from all sin," and that in the very shedding of this blood Jesus has not only triumphed over all the powers of darkness, but sought and obtained the victory, just to open the way even for the guiltiest and the most polluted to share the riches of redeeming grace.

The working of *indwelling sin,* too, is to be met and overcome by the purifying influence of your baptismal relation to Christ. If there be anything more prominently brought into view than another,

by the consideration of your Baptism, it is that you are "redeemed from your vain conversation, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" and if there be any conclusion to which you are thus more obviously led than another, it is that, being no longer your own, but Christ's—bought with a price so costly, you are bound by every tie of gratitude, as well as of duty, to "glorify him in your body and your spirit, which are his"—to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts," and "purify yourself even as he is pure." "Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by Baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

As a baptized person, you have been publicly and solemnly *separated from the world.* If there has been meaning in it at all, Baptism has stamped you with the character, and clothed you with the garb, of a "stranger and pilgrim on the earth." Consistency with this character, then, puts an end to everything like conformity to the world. The garb thus assumed can be but the cloak of vile hypocrisy, where the things of the world are still valued and sought after. The very thought of your Baptism, therefore, ought to produce—the habitual consideration of it cannot fail to maintain—a marked differ-

ence between you and all who are still "minding earthly things." If true to your baptismal vows, you can have no fellowship with the many that say, "Who will show us any good?" All your pursuits and all your tendencies are opposed to theirs. They are occupied with time: You are occupied with eternity. They "labour for the meat that perisheth:" You are labouring for the "bread that endureth unto everlasting life." Their happiness is bound up with the things of sense—the honors, the gaieties, the amusements, of this passing scene: Yours are all centred in the things that are above—"the glory" hereafter "to be revealed in the sons of God." In short, they think of nothing else, and desire nothing else, than to enjoy as much of the world as they can: You think of nothing so much, and desire nothing so much, as to keep yourself "unspotted from the world."—Nothing can be more opposed to the *spirit* and the *actings* of the men of the world, alike in business and in ordinary intercourse, than the principles to which the reception of this Sacrament has bound you. What, then, are we to think of you when we find you just doing as they do? bowing the knee and burning incense like them to Mammon; conducting the affairs of the farm, or the shop, or the counting-room, in the same money-getting spirit; as selfishly indifferent to the interest of others; as ready to take advantage of the ignorance, the inexperience, or the simplicity, of those who deal with you; as scrupulously adhering to what the world may call wisdom and prudence, but what to the eye of Christian principle seems very like dishonesty, and certainly has nothing in it like the "godly sincerity" of the Bible. Ah! there is nothing here of that *charity*

which reigns, more or less, in every genuine disciple of Jesus—that Christian love which is the "bond of perfectness," whose influencing maxims are these: "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" "Do ye even to others as ye would they should do unto you."—Nor is there any thing more different from the *social habits and customs and practices* of the world than just that course of life on which, as a baptized person, it is to be taken for granted you have entered. What are we to think, then, when in your domestic arrangements, or social intercourse, we find little or nothing that particularly distinguishes you in this respect? O! surely the luxurious indulgence which every where prevails—the extravagant houses, the gorgeous furniture, the sumptuous fare, the showy dress, the constant eagerness to be esteemed great or rich, or to be admired as fashionable or genteel—surely these are not for such as you, who are pledged by this Sacrament to take up the cross and follow Him of whom it is so affectingly said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." O! can you really be what Baptism marks you outwardly to be, and yet cultivate the friendship or relish the society of worldly men, who care not for God's glory, and recognise not the authority of God's Word, or tolerate in any way their opinions and maxims whose whole tone and tendency are dishonoring to Christ, or associate with them in those scenes of gaiety and folly where the concerns of the soul are studiously kept out of view as ill-timed or unbefitting, and whence all serious religion is banished, to leave room for music, and dancing, and card-playing, and profitless if not ungodly conversation, or even (it

may be) for employments and amusements of a still more questionable character.

3. While Baptism is thus to be improved as a means of stimulating you to serve the Lord, strengthening you to resist temptation, fitting you for the contest with Satan, and enabling you to overcome the world, its peculiar character as a BOND OF UNION in the Church of Christ is not to be overlooked or forgotten.

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." 1 Cor. xii. 12–14. From this language of the Apostle, it appears that the Ordinance of Baptism establishes among the people of Christ a connexion of the closest and most endearing description. It knits us together as all one in Jesus, partakers of the same renewed nature, bearing the same holy image, sharing the same spiritual provision, enjoying the same peculiar privileges, having the same common interests, and destined to dwell together in the same eternal heavenly home. No earthly union is so close as this which Baptism cements among the Lord's people. Jesus himself likens it to his own union with the Father. "That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." John xvii. 21.

Can we look to this, then, and not cherish the fulness of love to the brethren? Shall those in whom we have thus to recognise the likeness of our

own adored Redeemer—nay, whom we must identify with ourselves as members of Christ's body, and therefore bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, in a way and in a sense which nothing else can make them—shall these have no special hold on our esteem or our regard? O! it is as unseemly for the saints of God, baptized into the same Holy Spirit, not to "love one another with a pure heart fervently," as it is unnatural for children of the same earthly father to hate and quarrel with their own flesh and blood. Not to "walk together in love" is to cast suspicion upon all that, as baptized persons, we profess to be, and to desire and to hope for. Destitute of this Christian grace, we have nothing in us or about us of that "spirit of adoption" whereby, as intimated in our Baptism, we call Jehovah Father. It is essential to that personal connexion with Jesus, of which, as we have seen, Baptism is the sign and seal. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*" It is at once the evidence and the fruit of that great spiritual change emblematically denoted in Baptism, whereby the sinner is born into this Family of Christ—that "renewing of the Holy Ghost" which stamps him with the features of a child of God. "We know," says the Apostle John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because *we love the brethren.*" Yes, and even at the last day, this brotherly love practically manifested in our treatment of the Lord's people, is to be the test of that saving relation to Jesus, apart from which our Baptism is but an empty name. "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of *these my brethren,* ye did it unto me."

CHAPTER II.

THE DUTIES OF PARENTS IN CONNEXION WITH THE BAPTISM OF THEIR CHILDREN.

It is painful to observe the false principles on which parents very generally apply for this privilege; the unsuitable state of mind and heart in which they often receive it; and the total neglect of the obligations it lays upon them, with which they are almost universally chargeable. They seek to have their children baptized merely because it is the prevailing custom, or because they wish to save them from the reproach to which, if unbaptized, they are likely to be exposed. Not a few desire it because they consider it of advantage, in some unknown and unaccountable way, for saving the infant's soul. By others, the purpose for which it is administered is never thought of. Others, again, neither understand nor seek to understand its meaning and its use. That the child may get its name, is all that many intend or care for; while the great majority give themselves no concern about their own personal qualification for the service.

The act, too, of observing the Ordinance is in many cases nothing more than the "bodily exercise,

which profiteth little." It is a mere idle ceremony, with which the heart has little to do. There are few, at any rate, by whom, when engaged in it, any Christian grace is cherished or exercised. In short, they seem to think that little if any thing else is required than the mere presenting of the infant to have the water sprinkled on it, or the simple gesture of assent to what may be said by the Lord's servant, when preparing to administer the Ordinance.

Equally deplorable, and, if possible, still more unworthy, is the conduct by which the reception of this privilege is frequently followed. Hardly is the outward ceremony concluded, when the Ordinance is completely lost sight of. Neither its importance nor its practical bearing are any longer kept in view. It leaves no serious impression behind it. The unbefitting and unseemly, nay, sometimes unholy, festivity of which it is so generally the occasion, seems to blot out entirely the solemn engagement which it involves, and the public profession by which it has been preceded. That engagement is rarely afterwards attended to: that profession proves in too many cases as false as it is fruitless.

Of all this, doubtless, not a little may be ascribed to unfaithfulness on the part of those whose province it is to administer the Ordinance. With greater strictness of discipline, and more care in previously ascertaining the *spiritual state* as well as the scriptural knowledge and moral character of applicants for this privilege, the abuse referred to might be greatly lessened, if not entirely prevented. But surely, in by far the majority of instances, the fault lies with the parents themselves. At all events, however much the evil complained of may be occasioned or fostered by remissness on the

part of their spiritual rulers, that can never take away their own responsibility in regard to it. They are not the less bound to fulfil what belongs to them in connexion with the Baptism of their children. It is, consequently, of the very last importance that they should not only understand, but habitually keep in view, the various duties involved in the reception of this privilege. Accordingly, we have here to press on the notice of all such the three following particulars: The preparation needed for this Ordinance; the state of mind and heart in which it ought to be observed; and the conduct by which it should be followed.

I. The PREPARATION needed for observing the Ordinance of Baptism.

1. There must be *a competent knowledge of what is implied in this holy Sacrament.*

The necessity of such knowledge is very obvious. By many, indeed, it seems to be regarded as of no great importance. Amid the grossest ignorance of every thing connected with it, they hesitate not to apply for the Baptism of their children; and even, though conscious that they are thus ignorant respecting it, they still consider themselves qualified for engaging in the solemnity, and are not a little offended when the Lord's servant faithfully keeps them back till he may find them better instructed. At any rate, they think it quite enough if they can barely pass through the previous examination, necessarily short, and often in consequence very superficial, to which they are generally subjected. Nay, they often try to escape altogether from this examination, and are not a little gratified when, either

by their own crafty management or through the carelessness of their pastor, they obtain permission to present their children for Baptism, while yet they have little or no acquaintance with the nature of the Ordinance, and certainly no adequate conception of its value and its use.

Can any thing be more inconsistent with every principle of right reason than thus thoughtlessly to engage in a religious service, the meaning and bearing of which are neither understood nor cared for? Can any thing be more criminal than thus to profane an Ordinance so sacred in its own nature, and so precious in the eye of Him by whom it has been instituted? Outwardly, to receive this privilege with no intelligent view of the real import of the Ordinance, and no right apprehension of its holy ends, is nothing short of insulting the great Searcher of Hearts, who expressly requires it to be *spiritually* observed. Besides, in partaking of this privilege, the parent makes a profession of the Christian faith, and gives a promise of adherence to Christian duty. If, then, the objects of such faith be unknown, or the nature and extent of such duty be not distinctly recognised, thus to profess the one, or to promise the other, can be nothing else than a deliberate *lie*—a lie, too, which, inasmuch as the Ordinance is of the nature of a solemn oath, must bear all the guilt of PERJURY in the sight of God. To pass through the outward form of Baptism, therefore, in this state of ignorance regarding it, is just to express contempt for the character, to set at nought the authority, and to provoke the indignation, of Him from whom the Ordinance has come, and the purposes of whose grace it is designed to promote. Just in proportion, then, to the enormity of the

guilt here involved, and the magnitude of the danger here very manifestly incurred, is it necessary for every parent, before claiming the privilege of Baptism for his child, to make himself in some competent measure acquainted with the nature, import, and uses of the Ordinance, and the obligations which it implies.

2. As preparatory to the reception of this privilege, *Self-examination* is of no less indispensable necessity.

None but real disciples—converted persons, who are themselves united by faith to Jesus—have any warrant to claim this Sacrament for their offspring. Most certainly, if it be right that infants should be baptized at all, their title to it arises solely from their being regarded as in covenant with God. If, however, there be any thing more clear from Scripture than another, it is, that infants are regarded as in the Covenant only in virtue of descent from parents who are in that Covenant themselves—or, in other words, have really given themselves to Christ, and experienced the power of regenerating grace. The very nature and design of Baptism obviously excludes all who bear not this character from having anything whatever to do with it. The outward observance of it by the unbeliever is manifestly inconsistent and meaningless. Nay, it is an act of wilful and daring impiety. It is insulting the Lord to his face, inasmuch as it is declaring, in the use of the divinely-appointed token of the Covenant, an adherence to the Gospel-scheme with which the heart has no concern. True, the outward profession of Christian discipleship, if there be nothing, so far as human eye can judge, to dis-

prove its sincerity, is enough to warrant the rulers of the Church, in the exercise of their divine commission, to administer this Sacrament. It is altogether different, however, so far as the applicant for the privilege himself is concerned. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth: For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on *the heart.*" While strangers, therefore, to that *change of heart* which alone, in the sight of God, constitutes any one a true Christian, our title to receive this privilege cannot be recognised by Him. So that, unless we are indeed, in the right sense of the expression, disciples of Jesus—members not only of the visible but of the *true* Church of Christ—unless we are really what the Bible means when it speaks of being "born again,"—"created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works,"—it is A SIN OF NO ORDINARY MAGNITUDE to present our children for Baptism. It is intruding into that from which God himself has excluded us. Nay, the spiritual observance of the Ordinance is in such circumstances impossible. To engage in the outward service of Baptism, therefore, is in this case but an impious mockery, and must, of course, expose us to the divine judgments, so fearfully denounced in God's Word against all who profane his ordinances.

Let it not be said that Baptism is a privilege in its own nature, and that therefore the child is not to be deprived of it by the fault of the parent. As it has been well remarked—"Nothing is a privilege but what God has made such; and he has made nothing such except in his own way, and on his own terms. Baptism is a privilege, when administered and received in the manner appointed by him; but in no other. When this Ordinance is received in

any other manner, it is plainly no obedience to any command of his; and, therefore, has no promise, and no encouragement to hope for a blessing. Blessings descend when God is pleased to give them. But he cannot be expected to give them unless when he is obeyed."*

All this is seldom felt, and still seldomer practically acknowledged. Not a few even of those who readily admit that, while unconverted, they cannot lawfully take to themselves any of the Sacraments, yet see no harm, and have no scruples, in presenting their children for Baptism, though altogether unconscious of any such saving change. Real vital connexion with Christ is never looked to as a necessary qualification for the service. At any rate, the want of it is never actually taken into account as by any means a serious or startling obstacle. While multitudes keep away from the other Sacrament, though it is not a bit more sacred or more exclusively provided for real disciples, under the fear that they are not rightly prepared for it, few are ever actuated by the like fear in regard to this. Yet the sin in the one case is substantially, nay precisely, the same as in the other. The unworthy communicant is chargeable with "counting the blood of the Covenant wherewith he (Christ) was sanctified an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace." But how can the unbelieving parent be less chargeable with this awful crime, when, even while using the water of Baptism as the sacramental emblem of that same blood of the Covenant and that same Spirit of Grace, he is yet, as his unbelief necessarily implies, rejecting the one and despising the other?

* Dwight.

Unquestionably, the act of presenting his child for Baptism, while he is yet a stranger to this saving change, which alone constitutes the scriptural warrant for doing so, just as fully deserves, and must as certainly call forth, the wrath of God, as the similarly unwarranted approach to the Communion Table. Surely, therefore, it is of the utmost consequence that parents, when about to present their children for Baptism, should previously ascertain the reality of their own personal interest in Christ. The conclusion is obvious. *Self-examination cannot be wisely or safely neglected in preparing* for this holy Sacrament.

Are you claiming this privilege on behalf of your offspring?—have you a child to be baptized? It is alike your duty and your interest, then, on the one hand to ascertain your title to it, and on the other to avoid the guilt and the danger of unwarantably appropriating it. Can you point to any thing like the work of grace in your own soul? Have you ever known what it is to be under *real deep concern* about salvation? Have you had any thing like the experience of the Philippian jailor, when he cried, trembling, "What must I do to be saved?" or, of the humbled penitent publican, when he "smote upon his breast and said, God be merciful to me a sinner"? Have you found yourself shut up to the necessity of closing with the offer of Christ? and, constrained to turn away from every other refuge, have you taken Him home to your heart as your own Saviour—committing your all for eternity to Him, and thus identifying your own particular case with the success of his finished work? Are you conscious of any thing like the purifying and transforming influence realized by all who thus

give themselves to Jesus? Is there any thing in you or about you which betokens that work of the Holy Ghost, whereby the Lord's people are all made like himself—"changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" so that, pervaded by the same spirit, and actuated by the same principles, they stand visibly out from the world, counting all things but loss for Christ, and having no fellowship with any who love him not and serve him not? If you have reason to think that "the truth as it is in Jesus" has thus come home with converting and life-giving power to your own soul, then is it not only your right, but your duty, to have the seal of the Covenant applied to your child. And as, on the one hand it would be losing a privilege and committing a sin were you in this case to neglect it, so on the other hand, in observing the Ordinance, you are entitled to expect, on behalf both of yourself and of your offspring, the divine acceptance and blessing. But O! if you are a stranger to all this, BEWARE. It is not for you or yours that the Sacrament of Baptism has been provided. The outward observance of it can be of no value to yourself, and of no use whatever to your child. On the contrary, it must be to you and yours as unblest as it is unwarranted and sinful. Is it not, therefore, far safer and far wiser, not indeed to cast the privilege entirely away —not to give up the intention altogether of having your child baptized—but to postpone it until you have better evidence of that personal connexion with Christ, without which you have no title and no invitation to partake of sealing ordinances? And seeing that the saving change here required is solely and entirely the work of the Holy Ghost, we have to urge upon you the duty of crying earnestly for

the personal experience of his influences, and making a diligent use of all those means of grace wherewith he operates upon the minds and hearts of sinners. You are not without the most ample encouragement to take this course. Christ himself assures you that "the Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Ask," then, "and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find;" so that, as the result of the inquiry to which you are here directed in preparation for this holy service, you may be able in due time to satisfy yourself, on good Scriptural ground, that you have the invitation and the warrant thus to dedicate your child unto God.

3. As another preparative for the reception of this privilege, we have also to speak of *Communion with the Church of Christ.*

It seems to be the opinion of many, that a parent may lawfully receive this Sacrament of Baptism on behalf of his child while refusing the other Sacrament for himself. Though living in habitual neglect of the Saviour's dying command, they hesitate not to claim this privilege: they can't see how or why their right to it should be denied; nay, they are very apt to look upon themselves as personally insulted, or, at least, treated with gross injustice, when compliance with their request for it is refused or delayed.

Is this the case with you? Nothing can be more erroneous in principle; nothing can be more sinful in practice. Your neglect of the Lord's Supper must proceed either from unwillingness to obey the command of Christ, who has prescribed this particular way of acknowledging and honoring him, or from the conviction of unworthiness to ap-

proach his Holy Table. If it proceed from the former,—then, inasmuch as it implies contempt alike for his authority and for his work, it plainly demonstrates all who are chargeable with it to be "enemies of the cross of Christ." There is no middle position. "He that is not with me," says our Lord himself, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Whatever, therefore, may be your outward profession, if you are cherishing the spirit of opposition to his will and service in any one point, no matter what, it is clear as noon-day that you are yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," destitute of all interest in him as the Saviour of lost souls, and of all connexion with him as the Head of his Church. By obvious consequence, the deliberate refusal to receive the Sacrament of the Supper must of itself disqualify you for observing the Ordinance of Baptism. Thus proving that you belong not to Christ, and have nothing to do with the privileges of his house, it manifestly proves, at the same time, that to present your child for Baptism in such circumstances, is to contract the guilt, and, of course, to incur the danger, of profaning the Ordinance.

Besides, to neglect the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper is itself a sin of no ordinary magnitude. The command to observe it is distinct and peremptory. We are not left at all to our own discretion in the matter. The language of our Lord himself in reference to it is as express as any one precept in the whole Bible—"Do this in remembrance of me." Nay, the very circumstances in which the command to honor Christ at his table was issued lay us under a peculiar obligation to observe it. *It was his dying command.* And if the last request of a friend,

though but a frail and sinful mortal like ourselves, be so highly respected and valued, what are we to think of disregard for the dying command of Him who is "God manifest in the flesh," and to whom we are indebted for all that we are, and all that we hope for? O yes! say of it or think of it what you please, there is a degree of guilt here which nothing else can equal. Are you not *afraid*, then, to ask Baptism for your child, while thus living in virtual contempt of Christ, and in actual transgression of his law?

Would you venture to claim or to receive this privilege if chargeable with the transgression of any other of the divine commandments? "Do not kill," for instance—"Do not steal,"—"Do not commit adultery." Would you not think it an awful profanation to present your child for Baptism while thus characterized? But why? Is it not because none who are living in sin have any warrant to observe the Ordinance? But are you not as truly living in sin when habitually refusing to commemorate the death of Christ at the Communion Table? The command to do so, coming equally from Him on whose sovereign will the authority of the whole law depends, cannot be less entitled to your respect and submission than any thing else which that law may be understood to embrace. The neglect of Communion, therefore, must as really clothe you with the character of a sinner, as the commission of murder, or theft, or adultery. You may, perhaps, deny that there is the same *degree* of sin. But that is not the question. It is not the degree of guilt, but the *reality* of it, with which we have here to do. We are expressly told by an Apostle, that he "who offendeth *in one point* is guilty of

all,"—he is just as truly chargeable with contempt for the divine authority, and resistance to the divine will, as if he had broken the whole law of God. Habitually refusing, then, to obey the Saviour's dying command, and thus living in known and wilful sin, how can you ever think of appearing before the Lord, to observe an Ordinance provided exclusively for those whom he can recognise as his own?

But perhaps you think yourself UNWORTHY to approach the Table of Communion. Well, you have here an equally decisive reason against seeking Baptism for your child. The very same qualifications are prescribed for both Sacraments. Nothing more is required to fit you for either, than believing connexion with Christ. If you are a real disciple of Jesus—if you have indeed given yourself by faith to Him—then are you equally invited to both, and entitled to expect the divine blessing and acceptance, as much in observing the one as in receiving the other. To abstain, accordingly, from the Lord's Supper, is a distinct acknowledgment that you are unfit for Baptism. And seeing that they are of equal authority and of equal sacredness—signs and seals of the same Covenant, pointing to the same grand objects of faith and hope, and tending also to the same practical result—surely the conduct of the man who, though he finds himself excluded by personal unworthiness from the Sacrament of the Supper, yet comes with his child to receive the other Sacrament, is, to say the least, very strangely inconsistent.

Nay, but it is not merely that you are thus deplorably inconsistent. You are not less justly to be charged with deliberately contracted guilt. You

cannot escape this charge, take what view of the matter you please. Supposing, on the one hand, that you are entitled, as a real disciple of Jesus, to have the token of the Covenant put upon your child, then, of course, your neglect of the Lord's Supper, which you are equally, as such, bound to observe, must bear the character, and involve you in the consequences, of direct and wilful sin. Or supposing, on the other hand, that you are not a real disciple of Jesus, and are consequently unworthy to appear at the Lord's Table, then, unquestionably, by presenting your child for Baptism, for which, on the very same ground, you are also disqualified, you must be guilty of the most presumptuous opposition to the will and authority of God.

II. The STATE OF MIND AND HEART in which this Ordinance is to be observed.

1. There should be *a practical recognition of all that is implied in it.*

While actually engaged in this holy solemnity, it very manifestly becomes us to have our thoughts and feelings occupied with all that belongs to it, or is intended by it. Little penetration is needed to see that, apart from this, there can be no spirituality at all in the service. Most certainly, where there is no such recognition of its nature and design, Baptism is reduced to a mere idle, senseless, and, to say no worse, unprofitable ceremony.

Now, as we have seen, Baptism is a sign of the justifying efficacy of Christ's blood. While in the act of observing the Ordinance, then, you ought to keep this in view as concerning your child,—looking with believing confidence to the sufficiency

for saving the infant's soul, not less than your own, of the great sacrifice of the Cross thus emblematically set forth. Of course, too, you ought seriously to bear in mind the corruption of the infant's nature, to the removal of which the washing with water in Baptism refers. The justice, also, of that condemnation under which, as intimated in this Sacrament, the soul of your child, as well as of every human being, is lying, should be not less distinctly kept before you. The consequent impossibility of the child's deliverance from eternal destruction, apart from an interest in that redeeming grace, of which this Ordinance so significantly speaks, ought to be not only seriously considered, but really and heartily assented to. In short, when passing through this solemn service, you ought distinctly and consciously to recognize both the fact that your child is pervaded by original sin, and therefore guilty before God, and also the power of Jesus, by the blood of his Cross, to remove that guilt, and thus save your infant from the wrath and the ruin involved in it.

Baptism is a sign of Regeneration. While in the act, then, of using the outward symbol of renewing grace, you ought to cherish the sense of the value and the necessity of such grace for rooting out sin from the soul of your child, and implanting there the seeds of holiness, and thus fitting it for the service of God and the glory of heaven. The earnest desire, likewise, that the child you are presenting for Baptism may actually experience this regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit, and in due time exhibit its fruits, ought certainly to reign within you. And as the gift of the Holy Ghost is promised in answer to prayer, it is your obvious duty, while

thus engaged, fervently to implore it on behalf of your child.

Baptism is a sign of Dedication to God in Christ. Of course, then, it becomes you consciously to enter into this particular object of the service; in other words, to make heart-work of resigning your child into the hand of the Lord—placing it entirely and willingly under his providential care, and at his sovereign disposal. That the infant is wholly and forever the property of Him who gave it, should be felt and acknowledged. Bearing in mind that it has been created to glorify and enjoy God, the obligation to train it up for this important end, under which you are laid by the very act of observing the Ordinance of Baptism, should, at the same time, be realized and assented to. Nor should you be less deeply sensible, that, in thus devoting your child to the God of the Covenant, you are not only discharging a duty that belongs to you, but enjoying a privilege for which you never can be sufficiently grateful.

As we have also seen, Baptism is a seal, not less than a sign, of the Covenant of Grace. While engaged, then, in having this seal of the Covenant put upon your offspring, surely it becomes you to cast yourself wholly on the willingness of Christ, which the Ordinance, in this view, distinctly implies, to bless your child with the fulness of redemption. The impossibility of deliverance from the evils in which, as a lost soul, your child is by nature involved, except through this willingness of Christ to save, must be prominently kept in view. Of course, the grateful sense of his loving kindness, in thus looking to the everlasting welfare of this dear object of parental care, ought, in all its fervour, to reign

within you. And, encouraged by the contemplation of such unmerited love, you should, with deep humility indeed, but with believing confidence, appropriate to your infant, as well as yourself, the promises of the Covenant, and thus rejoice in the Lord as your own God and the God of your seed.

2. Baptism should be made *the occasion of special seriousness* of thought and of feeling.

This is in manifest accordance with the practical recognition of its nature and design, just specified, as essential to the spiritual observance of the Ordinance. The intelligent, believing contemplation of the truths which it exhibits—the realizing sense of the blessings which it is designed to convey—the personal conviction of the obligations which the reception of it involves—are fitted, in their very nature, to shut out the world, and draw the soul to God. It thus places those who observe it in circumstances, not only of unusual solemnity, but most favorable for serious reflection, and profitable converse with divine things. And surely to improve the opportunity thus afforded of growing in grace, is too precious to be lost by any who have it within their reach. It cannot be wisely or innocently neglected.

The contrary practice prevails to a most deplorable extent. Far from being thus suitably improved, this solemnity seems in too many cases but the pretext for laying aside the very appearance of seriousness in thought, speech, or behaviour. Friends and neighbours are brought together, not to assist one another in calling to mind the lessons as to the concerns of the soul, which the Sacrament of Baptism so impressively suggests, but to indulge in feasting and merriment and worldly conversation.

Nay, the sacredness of the Sabbath is seldom in such cases respected. Even when this happens to be the season of the solemnity, little difference is made as to the custom of which we speak; yet surely its folly and sin and danger are too obvious to be seriously denied.

As occurring on the Lord's Day, such conduct admits of no possible defence. Even in ordinary circumstances, worldly indulgence on that day, being at variance with the command to keep it holy, is peculiarly unbecoming in those who inhabit a Christian land, and highly criminal in all who make any profession of the Christian faith. What, then, must be its unseemliness and its criminality when thus practised in immediate connexion with this public acknowledgment of covenant-relation to God, and by consequence of special obligation to honor and to serve him? In such circumstances, indeed, the profanation of the Sabbath to which we refer may well warrant the suspicion that the Christianity of every one who can be charged with it is as really without substance as it is evidently without fruit.

But it is not merely when practised on the Lord's Day that there is here so much to be condemned. At no time whatever can such conduct be at all consistent with the nature of the service itself, or the solemnity of the profession implied in it on the part of the parent, and the awful responsibility under which it brings him. Surely, if there be a time when, more than another, worldly intercourse, or trifling amusement, or carnal enjoyment, are not merely out of place, but injurious and sinful, it is just the season of immediate approach to God in the character, and as claiming the privileges of, his believing and sanctified people. That heart can have

little interest in this important solemnity, which, almost in the very hour of engaging in it, can turn with relish to the gaiety or the jocularity of such festive intercourse. What are we to think of that man's attachment to Christ, who, in the very season that has called him to the public acknowledgment of it, seems to prefer the vanities and the joys of the world to the more sober, yet by no means less delightful, exercises of devout communion with God? How can we ever imagine any one to be impressed with the awful account ere long to be demanded of him as a parent in Israel, who yet hesitates not, on the very day that beholds another of their number publicly devoted to God, to place his family in circumstances the most unfavorable to all that concerns them as immortal and responsible beings? Such conduct in connexion with the observance of the Lord's Supper could not fail to be condemned by all who make the slightest profession of adherence to Christ. On what principle can it be less inconsistent or less sinful in connexion with the Sacrament of Baptism?

III. The conduct by which the observance of this Ordinance is to be FOLLOWED.

Here we have to remark, in general, that the conduct referred to should have for its end and aim the glory of God, and the advancement of Christ's cause in the world. That such is the prominent feature of all that the baptismal vow marks out for the parent, seems involved alike in the nature of this Ordinance itself, and in the act of observing it. There can have been neither propriety nor consistency in presenting his child for Baptism, if he has not had this object in view. The dedication of his

child to God clearly implies the profession of it, and the resolution to attend to it. Of course, therefore, his obligation practically to realize it is acknowledged and intimated by the very act of receiving this Sacrament on behalf of his offspring. So that here we have the grand principle which ought to give the whole tone and turn to the conduct of such as have been honored to present their children for Baptism. Concern for God's glory, and for the prosperity of the Redeemer's cause, ought to run through all that belongs to them and characterizes them as Christian parents.

More particularly, we have to remark that parents are bound by the reception of this privilege to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," to set before them a godly example, and to be much given to prayer.

1. Having been privileged to present your children for Baptism, *you are thereby specially bound to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

To do this, indeed, is incumbent upon every parent, without reference to Baptism at all. It is the very purpose for which God has placed you in the honorable position of a parent. "Children are an heritage of the Lord." They are God's gift—a treasure put into your hands to be managed on his account, and with a view to the accomplishment of his own purposes of grace and love concerning them. Accordingly, there is nothing to which, as parents, you are more frequently directed, or more solemnly called by the Holy Ghost in the Bible, than just the discharge of this particular department of duty.

But, in addition to what is thus involved in the very nature of the relation in which you stand to your children, the application to them of the seal of the Covenant binds you more imperatively still to make their religious training the grand object of your care concerning them. The act of thus devoting them to God has been altogether absurd on your part, if it has not been your intention that they should glorify and enjoy him, and must be utterly worthless in respect to your children themselves, if this intention be not followed up, and in due time accomplished. Clearly, therefore, the effort to fit them for doing so can be neither reasonably nor innocently neglected. If you are at no pains to train up your children in "the way that they should go," assuredly your observance of the Ordinance of Baptism must have been all a mockery —a mere shadow, with nothing in it like reality or sincerity. How, then, in this case, can you be free from the charge of abusing it, or trifling with it? Nay, you are guilty of the grossest injustice towards your offspring. You have claimed and received for them a privilege, which yet you are virtually making no privilege to them at all. With the one hand, you have presented them for Baptism; with the other, you are doing your utmost to render it useless to them—taking the readiest way of shutting them out from all the advantages connected with it, or flowing from it. So that, if you would be faithful to what you have professed to desire, and acknowledged that you ought to seek, on behalf of your children, when thus dedicating them to the service of God, you cannot but feel that you are under no ordinary obligation to train them up in the knowledge and in the practice of all that consequently

belongs to them. In other words, you are solemnly and specially bound to use every means, and to make every effort, for bringing them under the light and the power of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

This, then, should be your main concern in the education of your children, as having dedicated them to the Lord in Baptism. To this, all else that can affect their state or prospects, however desirable in other respects, is to be kept uniformly subordinate. The course generally pursued is very different. Judging from the existing state of society, there is no department of parental obligation more lightly regarded, or more universally trifled with. On every side, we behold the most lamentable proofs of negligence respecting it. Indeed, one of the most serious and distressing of all the obstacles with which, in the present times, the ministry of the Gospel has to contend, is just the want of this domestic religious training.

To this, doubtless, there are many lovely and delightful exceptions. We rejoice that we can point to not a few whose attention to the spiritual interests of their children is most exemplary—among whose domestic cares the work of preparation for eternity occupies its legitimate place, and of whose own Christian principle we behold the most interesting and satisfying evidence, in their watchful and prayerful anxiety for the immortal destinies of their tender charge. We feel confident that the beneficial effects so visibly realized, in the families of those of whom we speak, must afford them the most pleasing encouragement to perseverance in such faithfulness. Surely, while giving the glory of it all to God, whose blessing has so graciously prospered their labours, the very experience of the divine goodness

in this respect can only make them the more intensely alive to the magnitude of their obligation thus to train "a seed to serve the Lord." Aye, and even in regard to those cases where every hope is disappointed, and every effort seems to fail—where every prayer seems unheeded, and the heart of the pious parent is wrung with much painful concern as to the present state, and many an anxious foreboding as to the future progress, of his offspring—even here there is not wanting abundance of comfort and encouragement. For while even the most faithful have to mourn over their own shortcomings, as tending, not a little, in many instances, to frustrate their labours, all are still warranted to expect that, in the humble continued use of the divinely-appointed means, God will prosper the work, and that, as past experience has so often proved, faithfulness in this department of a parent's duty, however resisted or despised while under the parental roof, shall yet, when the Lord's time has come, have its influence in arresting the dear object of such pious care—softening him down into repentance, and leading him back to his father's God.

It must be confessed, however, that the examples of parental faithfulness, which we have thus to commend, are exceedingly rare. He must be a blind man, indeed, who does not perceive that by far the majority of the families around us are being trained, not for eternity, but for time—not for God, but for the world. It seems as if parents were everywhere under the impression that their children have no farther claim upon them than that they should be properly fed and clothed, and so educated as to be put in the fair way of occupying, with respectability and comfort to themselves, their place and station

in the present world. If this be accomplished, it matters little, in the estimation of not a few, what else becomes of them. And even where there seems to be something of the desire to keep them from the excess, at least, of the worldliness and dissipation and folly by which all who thus "mind earthly things" are more or less distinguished, their condition, as the subjects of God's moral government, is never thought of—their responsibilities and their prospects as immortal beings are never attended to. The whole course of their education is bent on fitting them for the pursuits, or leading them to the enjoyments, or gathering around them the gains or the honors, of the life that now is; while but a mere fragment of time and attention is occupied with the communication to them of that divine knowledge, apart from which all else is worthless for lost souls. In their domestic arrangements, the desire to serve the Lord is little manifested—the opportunity of engaging in religious exercises is as little provided for. Even during the seasons specially set apart for God's worship, parental authority is never used to enforce attention to it—parental influence is never exerted to induce the relish for it. Nay, it cannot be denied, and it should not be concealed, that even *with the connivance of parents themselves*, the holy Sabbath—the LORD'S DAY—is spent by a large proportion of our youth in idleness or unseemly recreation, in wanton mischief, or in uncontrolled profaneness and folly. And not to mention the open departure from the way of godliness and sobriety and purity which betoken the prevalence, in early life, of such unholy habits, we have abundant evidence of this negligence on the part of parents, in the melancholy reluctance of their children, when

arrived at the years of understanding, publicly to devote themselves to Christ, and the still more distressing ignorance of divine things discovered by them when candidates for the peculiar privileges of his people.

This is no exaggerated statement. It must be borne out by the observation of all who can take a candid and intelligent view of what is every day passing around us. It may be that the conscience of the reader himself is saying to him, "Thou art the man." Is it so? O then we would implore your serious, prayerful, self-applying attention to what we have here to submit, in urging and enforcing the duty of training up your children in the knowledge of divine truth, and in the practice of religious duty.

Even as bearing upon their *temporal* interests, it is of unspeakable importance to make your children familiar with "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is the only effectual means of implanting those upright principles, without which little good can be expected either of them or by them. It will not be denied that on the reputation sustained by them their worldly prosperity must, in a great measure, depend. But how can they acquire or preserve this needed respectability of character, if they are left in ignorance of what belongs to them as moral and responsible beings? Their usefulness, too, as members of society, must obviously be interwoven with that cultivation of mind and heart which implies the knowledge of the things that be of God. Nor can we point to any better security for their comfort and happiness amid the toils and trials and difficulties of life, than just that state of thought and feeling which the Gospel alone can produce. Besides,

have we not the assurance of the Lord himself, that "godliness," which, of course, can be the fruit only of sound religious knowledge, "is profitable unto all things, having the promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come."

It must not be forgotten, however, that your children have *souls to be saved*, as well as bodies to be cared for. Their immortal destiny, not less than their worldly prospects, has to be looked to. Their eternal welfare, not less than their temporal interests, has to be provided for. And as it is by the Gospel alone that the preparation needed for what thus awaits them beyond the grave can be secured, their intimate acquaintance with what that Gospel proclaims is indispensable. Your children, as you have acknowledged at their Baptism, are by nature lying under the condemning sentence of a broken law, and, in consequence, exposed to the wrath of an offended God. But how can they escape from such condemnation and wrath, if the way of justification, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, be not made known to them? Inheriting the seeds of our common corruption, they are naturally disposed to all that is evil now, and incapacitated for all that is glorious hereafter. And how is this depraved tendency to be rooted out, or this unfitness for heaven to be removed, if they are never brought under the light of that truth whereby the Holy Spirit sanctifies the soul? In short, there is but one way of entering into life. To that way nothing but the Gospel can lead them. If, therefore, the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus" be not imparted to your children, their salvation is impossible. And O! surely, when you look to the infinite value of what thus bears upon

their immortal interests, as compared with even the most important concerns of this fleeting mortality, you cannot resist the impression that the communication of divine knowledge, with which these immortal interests are so closely interwoven, must be beyond everything else the most precious and desirable.

What can you ever do for your family—what blessing can you ever desire for them—what inheritance can you ever leave them, that can be put into competition with this? Will you provide for them the abundance of worldly goods? Alas! the world's wealth is at best, when unsanctified, but a snare and a curse here, and leaves the soul all destitute and naked as it passes away to its final account. Will you enrich them with the treasures of learning or science? These, indeed, are very valuable in their own place, and, when used for their own proper ends, are very desirable. But, separate from the things of the Spirit of God, however precious in their bearing on the present life, they are useless—they are worse than useless as a preparation for that which is to come—tending rather to harden the heart, and lead the soul from God. Would you load them with the honors of the world? These are but the nurseries of pride and vanity—often in themselves empty and worthless, and still oftener intermixed with disagreeables that poison all their enjoyment. Would you introduce them to the pleasures of the world? Are not these, at the best, all unsatisfactory and fleeting? There is scarcely a single one of them to which the language of the Wise Man may not be applied: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is the spirit of heaviness." They

give no comfort in the hour of trial; they shed no light on the valley of the shadow of death; there is no room for them in the grave; and as to all that lies beyond it, their only tendency is to plunge the soul deeper and deeper into the gulf of despair. O no! an infinitely better inheritance than any or all of these is to be found for your children in that acquaintance with God in Christ, which prepares the soul for heaven. Here are the true riches—the perfection of knowledge—the source of untainted honor—the centre of happiness without alloy—the introduction to glory unspeakable—an inheritance compared with which the whole created universe is worthless. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Why, then, is it that, in the education of your children, their religious instruction occupies a place so inferior and subordinate? Why is it that, amid all your unwearied exertions to make them familiar with what may enable them to prosper in the varied conditions of this fleeting world, you attend with so much reluctance, if you attend at all, to the duty of making them familiar with what bears upon the prosperity of that life which, long after the present world with all its fascinations has passed away, is to be developed in glory that shall never fade, and bliss that shall never end? O! it is *cruel* thus to trifle with the best and dearest interests of your offspring—most awful to leave them, in the very teeth of your baptismal engagements concerning them, to go down to the grave in that state of spiritual darkness which must hurl them into the horrors of unquenchable fire. Need we remind you that the day is rapidly drawing nigh when you must appear before the tribunal of Christ, to render the

account of all that now belongs to you in this as well as every other department of duty? O! then, what must be your situation there if, in spite of all your baptismal vows, you thus prefer for your children the service of Mammon, and thus stand between them and the preparation needed for a coming immortality? How dreadful, when summoned with your offspring to the judgment-seat, to hear yourself denounced as the instrument of devoting them to the world's god, and thus unfitting them for the glory, and shutting them out from the joys, of heaven! How very dreadful to behold them led away from the presence of the Judge to that place of unutterable woe, for the horrors of which your own heedlessness of their spiritual state has prepared them! How inconceivably dreadful to find yourself lying, and that, too, in the unveiled presence of God, under the charge of ruining—nay, *murdering* their souls! O! if you have one spark of parental affection within you, think of this; and instead of seeking to call around your children the fleeting possessions, the empty enjoyments, the trifling attainments of this vain mortality, let the "one thing needful" be the grand object of your care concerning them. Let it be your constant aim—your unwearied endeavour—to fill them with that divine knowledge which "maketh wise unto salvation"—that experimental acquaintance with the things that be of God in Christ, of which alone they shall reap the blessed fruit, long after the treasures of earth have been snatched from their grasp by the cold hand of death, and time has passed away with them into the land of forgetfulness, and all their much valued accomplishments have been buried with them in the grave.

Nor are you to be contented with the communication to your children of religious knowledge. You may be very faithful and very successful in making them acquainted with divine things;—you may instil into their minds and imprint upon their memories all that concerns them as God's creatures, the subjects of his moral government, and the objects of redeeming grace;—in short, you may make them familiar with the whole range of revealed truth; and yet such knowledge, excellent as it is in its own nature, must after all, if not reduced to practice, prove utterly worthless. The Gospel is not a mere theory—not a mere system of intellectual truth, having to do with the understanding alone, and bearing little, if at all, upon the character and conduct. It is a *practical* system, having all its principles directed to the production, and developed in the progress, of pious deportment. Accordingly, it prescribes a variety of duties and observances, as implied in and naturally flowing from the believing reception of its doctrines. It is not enough, therefore, to make your children acquainted with Christian truth. If there be meaning in the engagement to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it lays you under the obligation to familiarize them with those religious exercises, apart from which the knowledge of divine truth is of little value, and the belief of it is all empty and fruitless. You are specially bound to train them up in the habit of attending to the worship of God, alike in secret and in public—to frequent the throne of grace—to keep the Sabbath holy—to wait on the services of the sanctuary—in short, to "walk" habitually "in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord;" and thus to

have their "conversation such as becometh the gospel of Christ." If this be not your aim and your endeavour—if you do not employ all your parental authority and all your personal influence to cause your children thus to turn to its intended *practical* account the religious instruction which you give them—then, assuredly, you are far from fulfilling your baptismal engagement to train them up in the way that they should go.

Say not that you cannot spare the time or the labour which this important work requires. You are not at liberty thus to excuse yourself. The command to train your children in the knowledge and practice of saving truth is too explicit and peremptory to give you any such license respecting it. It meets you in every page of God's word. It is there prescribed in terms which you can neither mistake nor explain away. And, at any rate, the duty has been distinctly recognised by you in receiving the privilege of Baptism for your children. Nay, you have not only thus acknowledged it, but come under an express and solemn vow faithfully and perseveringly to attend to it. Until, therefore, it can be shown that your temporal affairs, be they what they may, are of such superior importance as to give them a better claim to your time and attention, it is obviously out of the question to plead want of leisure for the religious training of your family. Till it can be maintained that to provide for their earthly good is more desirable than to secure their eternal well-being, you are not entitled to grudge or withhold any additional expense of labour, or convenience, or personal comfort, needed for the work.

Nor will it avail to say that you want the talents and attainments needed to qualify you for thus training your children. If this be true, then, what is the inference to be drawn from it as to your own state and prospects? Ah, there is here much to fill you with serious concern. Does it not imply that you are not only as ignorant of divine things as your uninstructed children themselves, but so destitute of the means, if not of the desire, to become acquainted with divine things, as to despair of being instrumental in thus leading your children to know and serve the Lord? Nay, there is here implied what is greatly more serious. If it be true that you are unable to instruct your children in divine things, then, as having presented them for Baptism, you must be charged with the awful crime of *perjury*. In receiving this privilege, you have expressly and solemnly, *in the recognised presence of God*, and therefore under all the obligation of an OATH, engaged to train them up alike in the knowledge of Christian truth, and in the practice of Chistian duty; and yet it seems, at the very time when you were taking this solemn oath, you must have been conscious of total inability to fulfil, and of course have had no real intention to fulfil, the engagements which it involved. And O! are you willing then to remain in this fearful state of spiritual ignorance—a state of ignorance which, while it must issue in the ruin of your own soul, can only drag along with you into the same eternal ruin those who are naturally so dear to your hearts, and cling around you in such fond confiding dependence. Or are you prepared to lie under the tremendous burden of the guilt which thus by your own admission belongs to you, and which not only must shut you

out yourself from the hope of heaven, but tends to bring down the displeasure of a holy God upon the family of which you are so unworthy a head. O no! it cannot be. You will not surely suffer yourself to remain in such ignorance and guilt. If you really have not the ability to train up your children in the knowledge and service of God, you will set yourself without a moment's delay to acquire it. If you really have it, you will not put off for another hour the endeavour to turn it to its proper account.

2. By the reception of this privilege, you are specially bound to set before your children a *godly example*.

Upon no principle, whether of duty or of affection toward your family, can you neglect to walk before them in all "holy conversation and godliness." But, surely, as having presented your children to receive this Sacrament of Baptism, to which they have no right except in virtue of your being yourself a true believer, you are obviously and particularly called to shew that you are really so, by thus living unto God in holiness.

The success, too, of your exertions to train up your children in the service of Christ, to which you have thus solemnly dedicated them, must obviously depend not a little on your own personal devotedness to that holy service. Deficiency in respect to this cannot but stand very grievously in the way of all that is done by you, in seeking whether to communicate to them the knowledge of divine truth, or to lead them in the way of Christian duty. The very consciousness that your children are beholding, in your own character and conduct, any thing

inconsistent with the doctrines you are teaching, or the precepts you are enforcing, cannot fail to interfere more or less injuriously with the desired result. Its obvious tendency, indeed, is just to make you neglect this department of parental duty altogether. The task cannot but be, in this case, very irksome and distasteful. Every step you take in it must be a practical condemnation of your own irregularity. Loaded, consequently, with self-reproach, if you be not paralyzed with the sense of guilt or the feeling of shame, you must, at least, be tempted to avoid the charge of such inconsistency, by relaxing your diligence, or rather by relinquishing the work. At any rate, it is not to be supposed either that your instructions can be given with suitable earnestness, or that your authority and influence can be exerted with the requisite firmness and freedom, when, all the time, you are aware that your children may very justly address to you, and are probably in their hearts applying to you, the Apostle's language—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Even supposing that, in such circumstances, you might be able to prosecute the task with the requisite energy and perseverance, you could hardly look either for confidence or for respect toward you on the part of your children. The youngest of them would soon draw for himself the inference, as to your own character, so obviously warranted by such inconsistency. If able at all to make them believe the doctrines of the Gospel, or to value its precepts, you must necessarily, in doing so, lead them, not only to question your own wisdom, in practically disregarding these doctrines and precepts, but to form a low estimate of your character, as manifestly

at variance with them. And thus the more you succeed in teaching your children to fear the Lord, and honor Jesus, and love the service of Jesus, you are training them, in the same proportion, to despise you, and, by obvious consequence, tempting them to resist your authority, and cast all your admonitions to the winds.

Then, too, the inherent influence itself of your example must not be lost sight of. We all know that young persons are naturally prone to imitate those whom they are taught to reverence, or in whom they are accustomed to confide. Even the example of comparative strangers, with whom they may happen to associate, is of very powerful influence in directing their sentiments, forming their habits, and regulating their conduct. How much greater, then, must be the effect of the example of a parent, who is ever in the midst of them, holding daily and hourly intercourse with them, and whom both nature and duty teach them to respect and love—an example, moreover, peculiarly commended and enforced by all that interchange of domestic endearment which the intimate connexion between a parent and his children implies? Having, then, at your command, an instrument so effective for giving weight alike to your instructions and to your authority, as a parent in Israel, O! you must be strangely deaf to every call of domestic duty—you must be sadly dead to every feeling of domestic love—if you do not strive, with all care and perseverance, to employ it.

Nor are you to forget that your children are pervaded by the inherent corruption of our fallen nature, and ever prone consequently to follow what is evil, rather than to practise what is good. What

have you to expect, then, but that evil example will much more easily, and much more effectively, influence them than good; and that, even of the best of characters, they will be much more ready to pick out the defects than to perceive the excellencies—to imitate the vices rather than to follow the virtues? This is no mere speculative conclusion. It is a matter of every-day experience. Instances of it are to be found in the history of every family, aye, and of every child, among us. O! surely, then, if there be any thing in you like the feeling of affection for your children, still more any thing like the sense of duty towards them, the consideration of this must put you ever on your guard against being thus, indirectly indeed, but not the less criminally, instrumental in leading them away from "whatsoever is honest or lovely or of good report;" nay (more awful still), ruining for eternity their precious and immortal souls.

3. By receiving the privilege of Baptism for your children, you have laid yourself under a special obligation to be *much given to prayer.*

The very character in which the parent presents himself to observe the Ordinance, implies that he is a man of prayer. It is in the capacity of a *true believer* alone that he is recognised as entitled to this privilege, and invited to receive it. A prayerless believer, however, is a contradiction in terms—an absolute impossibility. If he be not a man of prayer, it is as certain as the Bible is true that he belongs not to Christ. Of course, therefore, if destitute of the spirit and the habit of prayer, his approach to the Sacrament of Baptism must be as unwarranted and sinful as his observance of it must

be an empty form. What, then, but the experience of God's wrath is to be expected as the consequence of thus daring to trifle with it? Believing prayer, moreover, is the channel through which, according to God's own appointment, all the blessings of which Baptism is the sign are conveyed. We have no warrant to hope for any of these blessings if we do not "by prayer and supplication make known our requests" for them "unto God." Nay, while wilfully neglecting to do so, it is not only vain, but presumptuous, to look for even the smallest of them. Clearly, therefore, there can be little sincerity in the profession made by every parent at the Baptism of his children, of desire that they may share the blessings of salvation, and certainly as little consistency in the application to them of the seal of such blessings, if he be not in the habit of imploring at the throne of grace the full and effectual communication of them.

Here, then, the duty of believing prayer is enforced by every principle alike of parental affection and personal consistency on all who enjoy the privilege of having their children dedicated unto the Lord in Baptism. If really actuated by such principles, all who are thus privileged cannot but find themselves constrained habitually to hold communion with God at the throne of grace. They cannot but be alive to the vast importance of seeking, at the hand of their own heavenly Father, the blessings so particularly needed to meet the responsibilities under which the observance of the Ordinance has laid them.

Have you thus solemnly devoted your children to God? Pledged, then, to train them in his service and for his glory, you can neither wisely

nor safely neglect what is thus so essential to the accomplishment of the end in view. Conscious, therefore, of your weakness and insufficiency as a parent in Israel, cast yourself in this appointed way on the power of Him whose promised "grace to help" the Sacrament of Baptism itself proclaims. And knowing well that, apart from the Lord's blessing, your instructions and exhortations and example must be all thrown away, be unceasing as well as earnest in crying for the influences of the Holy Ghost, to make you at once faithful and successful in discharging the trust committed to you.

But it is not merely in your own behalf that you are thus called to the throne of grace. Your children themselves need to be prepared for receiving, not less than you have to be fitted for communicating, the benefits of parental training. If the Holy Ghost do not open their hearts to "receive the truth in the love of it," all you can ever say to them, and all you can ever do for them, must go for nothing. You may fill their heads to overflowing with divine knowledge, you may store their memories with every truth in the Bible, you may lead them by your example or your authority professedly to value or outwardly to respect the service of God; but until the Holy Spirit shed down upon them his quickening and renewing influence, it is all as water spilt upon the ground. Be in earnest, then, to obtain for them this awakening and sanctifying grace. If you be not really so, your approach with them to this holy Sacrament must have been an act of hypocrisy, and an insult to God. O! then, if you would not have this fearful charge brought home to you, give yourself continually, with your whole heart, to prayer, for

the outpouring of the Spirit's influence upon the souls of your children. Pray that, through his enlightening energy, they may not only understand, but be savingly impressed by, what you say to them, when unfolding the glories of salvation, as signed and sealed to them in Baptism. Pray that his converting power may so accompany your exhortations, when pressing upon them the offer of Jesus, that they may be constrained to take him home in faith and love to their hearts, and thus make your baptismal dedication of them to God their own. Pray that, by his regenerating grace, they may be transformed into the image of Jesus, and, becoming partakers of all the blessings which their Baptism has been intended to convey, may "live as the children of God, without rebuke," in this world, and, advancing from one degree of Christian perfection to another, may be at length "presented faultless before the presence of the glory of God," in the world to come.

The duty of FAMILY PRAYER is not less obviously incumbent on all who have been honored to present their children for Baptism. It is peculiarly, as the head of a family, that you have been invited to receive this privilege; and, by the act of receiving it, you have adopted, on behalf of all who belong to you in this capacity, the resolution of Joshua, "As for me and for *my house* we will serve the Lord." Clearly, therefore, you are bound to train up your children for God, not merely as individuals, but as a family. Of course, then, the exercises of domestic worship cannot be neglected, without not only breaking the baptismal vow, but defeating the very object of observing the Ordinance. In the

nature of the case it cannot be otherwise. For while, on the one hand, it exposes all concerned to the wrath of a holy God, it shuts them out, on the other hand, from many of the blessings by which, as signed and sealed in Baptism, that wrath is met and removed. Look to the awful language of the Prophet, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the *families* that call not on thy name." Jer. x., 25. Thus classed with the heathen, a prayerless family is stript of the very character with which Baptism is intended to clothe them. They are as really separated from the God of the Covenant, in their social capacity, as if, like the heathen, they had never entered into that Covenant at all. So that, when you erect not the family altar, instead of making your dwelling-place a house of God, you just stamp it with the likeness of that frightful prison-house of the lost, whence no prayer ascends. O! how then can you expect that God's favor and love can ever enter there, or abide there? Aye, and even as in thus banishing the worship of God from your household, you are taking the readiest way of turning it into a nursery for Satan—making it a school-house of the Prince of Darkness—you must be held personally responsible for all that is evil, whether in principle or in practice, of which your children may prove, or rather, in this case, are almost certain to prove, the examples. Doubtless, they shall still have to answer for themselves; while it is by no means impossible that even the strictest and most faithful attention to the duties of family religion may after all prove unavailing. But, if there be any wilful neglect on your part to put them in the way of what may be, and, when rightly improved,

must be, conducive to their preservation from sin, beyond all doubt you are a partaker of their guilt, and render yourself liable to share their doom.

As the neglect of family worship thus tends to defeat the object of Baptism, so the practice of it, on the other hand, is conducive to all that is most precious in that holy object. Just think of the spiritual prosperity with which it tends to bless the domestic circle. Your children find you at their head, in circumstances not only in themselves of deep solemnity, but fitted to give them the most favorable impressions alike of your own nearness to God, and of their nearness to your heart as to all that concerns them for eternity. Will they not then reverence you all the more, and love you all the more, for it?—will they not listen with deeper respect to your instructions?—will they not yield with more endearing confidence to the influence of your example? And will you then, in the neglect of domestic devotion, lose the high and holy satisfaction of thus leading the objects of your purest affections to the cheerful and faithful, and of course profitable, discharge of the duties that belong to them as dedicated in Baptism unto God? Think, too, of the happy prospect thus opened up to you for eternity. Ere long, the chamber of sickness is to be darkened, and the bed of death to be spread for you; and as you are passing away under the hand of the destroyer to your heavenly Father's home, the dear objects of your parental care may be weeping and mourning around you. But, O! with what comfort can you not leave them all in the thought that having trained them as "a seed to serve the Lord," they are travelling to the same city of rest, and that therefore though separated from

them for a season, you shall meet them again, to resume together in heaven on high those holy exercises in which it has been your delight to engage with them here on earth. And if, perhaps, there be among them some poor unhappy wayward one, for whom your doubts and fears have been awakened, still can you not indulge the hope that the prayers of a godly family shall not be lost upon him; but that long, perhaps, after you are laid to sleep in the dust, the Lord's hand may be stretched forth to pluck him as a brand from the burning, and bring him home at last to meet with you in glory. With what peaceful confidence, too, can you not resign them to the care of a wise and gracious Providence? Having "brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," you have not only placed within their reach the most desirable of spiritual blessings, but you are leaving them the best of all legacies, even as to the present world? Yes, even as to temporal good, there is a special blessing reserved for the seed of the righteous. "What man is he that feareth the Lord, his soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall *inherit the earth*." And for the children themselves you are thus leaving behind you, how bright and glorious are the prospects here opened up! Many a trial awaits them. Not a few are the dangers and difficulties and sorrows through which they must be tossed on the stormy sea of life. But they have been given to God; they have been led to Jesus; and overwhelmed and ever ready to sink amid the waves, as may be the frail vessel that carries them, Christ is with them in it: and even, as in the days of his flesh, he rebuked the tempest and brought his disciples in safety to land, so will he in his own

time and way conduct them to the shore of yonder bright and happy world, there to dwell "forever safe, forever blest," with that vast family of peace and joy and love, with whom, as in covenant with God, they are even now united, to enjoy, in fuller measure than has ever graced an earthly home, the preciousness of holy communion with the Lord, and raise together in richer and sweeter melody than has ever filled an earthly father's house "the song of Moses and the Lamb."

A variety of EXCUSES are offered for the neglect of family worship. These may be all reduced to three—want of courage, want of gifts, and want of time.

1. Do you allege that you have not *courage* for it—that you are afraid to undertake it? Well, but how does it happen that you have a sufficiency of courage for every thing else? Strange that such diffidence should make its appearance only to prevent you from serving God, and leave you free to serve the world and self and sin! Strange that you have plenty of courage for the bustle and anxieties of business, but no courage for the quiet and peaceful exercises of domestic worship!—plenty of courage for appearing in scenes of frivolous amusement, and sharing the follies of the idle, the irreligious, and the gay; but no courage to appear at the family altar, and share with those who are dearest to you the substantial and satisfying joys of communion with Jesus!—plenty of courage to sin against God, and expose yourself to his wrath, as well as to the pity, if not the displeasure, of his people; but no courage to uphold his glory, and set at defiance the ridicule and the opposition of the

ungodly and profane! Truly, this diffidence is not a little obliging thus to take itself off whenever likely to interfere with your taste for worldliness or folly or sin, and come again so seasonably to your aid when in want of an excuse for neglecting your duty to God, and the children he has given you! Is there no reason to suspect that such want of courage is but a mere pretext?—a mere fancy? At all events, there is some reason to conclude that you are not very anxious to get rid of it.

But if it be true that you have not courage for this duty, and are really desirous to get the better of such timidity, then, surely, you are not taking the most rational way of meeting the evil. Thus yielding to it, you are only increasing its power over you. Firmly and perseveringly to resist its influence, is surely the wiser and safer course to adopt for its removal. Most certainly, you cannot innocently neglect to do so. And the sooner you begin, the better—delay, at any rate, can do no good. Begin now, then, and trust to God for the confidence you need. Begin now, and, with the very resolution thus to honor and obey him, the Lord himself will give you courage to go through with it.

But is there any thing really to make you so timid and bashful in regard to this duty? What! ashamed of it? You, who have publicly and solemnly appropriated to yourself and your children the privileges of the Lord's own people, yet ashamed to acknowledge him, at the head of your family, as your and their Covenant God! Ah! is there not here the most melancholy evidence that your heart is yet far from Jesus? Remember and consider his own awful language—"Whosoever shall be

ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

2. Do you allege that you *want the requisite gifts* for family worship ?—that you are not able suitably to engage in it? Well, if this be true—if you are really unfit for the duty, and afraid to dishonor God by an unbecoming discharge of it, still, are there not many excellent forms of prayer provided by the more gifted servants of God, which may be used with advantage? What hinders you from thus seeking to supply the deficiency?

It is very seldom, however, that the want of gifts for family prayer is such as to justify this mode of accomplishing the duty. However formidable in reference to this matter, no such difficulty is found to interfere with the ordinary affairs of life. When, for instance, you have offended a friend or neighbour, are you unable to express your sense of the injury you may have done him, or your desire to obtain his forgiveness, and to be restored to his confidence and favor? Are you ever at a loss, when in difficulty or in danger, intelligibly to seek the advice or the protection of the wise or the powerful among men? Or do you find it difficult to ask the aid or the sympathy of those around you when visited with poverty or sickness or sorrow? Well, then, what hinders you from doing the same thing at the throne of grace? Will God be less able to understand you than your fellow-men? or less disposed to hear and to help you? Strange that you should have so low an opinion of your capacity in regard to this matter! Ah, there is no real, certainly no Christian, humility here.

If you are really unable properly to conduct the exercises of family devotion, instead of being satisfied with this as an excuse for neglecting the duty, you should rather be *ashamed* of such want of gifts for it, and *grieved* that you have not sooner acquired them. Alas! there is much room here for suspicion that you want the spirit of prayer altogether—that you have not the habit of praying *in secret.* "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Wherever, therefore, there is a praying heart, there will be no want of praying lips. Assuredly, if you have any serious impressions of your own guilt and danger, or any real experience of the preciousness of Christ for the salvation of your own soul, the difficulty you here plead will be felt but little, if felt at all—you will find yourself at no loss for words intelligibly to acknowledge, at the head of your family, the evils in which, as fallen beings, they are equally with yourself involved, or suitably to implore the blessings of which, as sinners, you are together standing in need.

But, at any rate, the best way to become qualified for this duty is just to *put your hand to it.* Who ever thinks of qualifying himself for any profession or trade or other temporal calling, except in the way of practising it, and cultivating the habits connected with it? Nor is the case different as to the duty before us. In this, as in every thing else, "*practice makes proficiency.*" Only set about it in real earnest, and all serious difficulties will vanish. You cannot neglect to do so without being chargeable with guilt in the sight of God.

3. Perhaps you plead *want of time*:—Your occupations are so numerous, or they require such constant attention and care, as to leave you no

leisure for the exercises of domestic religion. O! is it possible that you can venture to offer an excuse like this? What! time for the service of Mammon, but no time to serve the Lord!—time for the vanities and pleasures and gains of this poor, miserable, fleeting world, but no time for what concerns your own and your children's salvation! How very awful! Are you not afraid to utter it?—afraid that the Lord would crush you to the dust in the very act of pleading it, and leave you in righteous indignation to the consequences of your earthliness and selfishness?

But are you serious in offering this excuse? Are you really in earnest when you say that you have no leisure for this department of parental duty? Do you indeed believe that the few minutes—extending, it may be, to a quarter of an hour morning and evening—spent in reading, praying, and praising God with your family, will materially interrupt your worldly business, or interfere with your worldly prosperity? Even though it were to do so, what then? Ah! you think of the loss for time, but you look not to the still more awful loss for eternity!

If it be really true that your worldly employment so completely occupies your time and attention as that, by reason of it, you cannot worship the Lord in your family, then there is some reason to suspect that it is not Christian in its nature and tendency. In this case, the sooner you get quit of it the better. You cannot continue in it without rebellion against God. It is at the peril of your soul, therefore, if you do not without delay relinquish it. It matters not at what cost you may have to do so. At all hazards—in the face of every conceivable hardship to which, in making the sacrifice, you may

be exposed, your plain and obvious duty is to have nothing whatever to do with it. "Better cut off a right hand—better pluck out a right eye—better lay down life itself, than be cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Or, if the worldly calling which stands in your way be not thus unchristian and sinful in its character, then there must be something wrong in your manner of following it. At any rate, you are giving it an importance which it does not and ought not to bear. Remember it is the blessing of God alone that maketh rich. Apart from his countenance and favor, there can be no family, any more than individual, prosperity. O! you may make your children rich and accomplished and gay —you may surround them with every comfort— you may give them every advantage—you may lead them into every enjoyment which temporal prosperity can command—but, unsanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit, it must be all empty and vain; nay, it can be but a snare and a curse, tending to keep them away from Christ, and thus to ruin them for eternity. It is your duty, not only for yourself but for your offspring, to "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness." If, therefore, you allow any occupation, be it what it may, to interfere with this, it must bear all the character, and lead to all the consequences, of opposition to God and separation from Christ. And O! think for a moment. To be without God and without Christ is to be without hope. It is to be a child of the devil, a vessel of wrath, an heir of hell. It is to lose the soul; and "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

CONCLUSION.

We would now, in conclusion, offer a word of exhortation to young persons born of Christian parents, and brought up in the profession of the Christian faith.

Great and manifold, dear young friends, are the advantages which, as connected with such parents, you are permitted to enjoy. Dedicated to the Lord in Baptism, not only have you been cast upon the care of Him who is as wise to guide you as he is powerful to protect you, but you have been set apart for his service more particularly as the objects of his redeeming love. Permitting you thus to receive the outward token of the Covenant, and thereby recognizing your special connexion with himself, God has given you the pledge for the participation of all that, in the exercise of such love, has been provided for lost souls. And the very purpose for which you have been admitted into the visible Church, by the reception of this holy Sacrament, is just to bring you within reach of the means of grace, whereby the Lord's people are not only led to the possession and enjoyment of the great salvation, but fitted for the pursuits and the duties that belong to them as his beloved

children and covenanted people. Just in proportion, then, to the value of the privileges thus conferred upon you, must be the amount of your guilt, if you be not now grateful for it, and do not now seek to improve it. You know where it is said, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." And surely you cannot have forgotten the solemn language of our Lord himself, when he thus spake of the cities of Galilee, which had despised and abused their mercies—"Wo unto thee, Chorazin; wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in thee, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you." Look, then, to the peculiar responsibility under which your Baptism has laid you. Beware of neglecting or abusing the privilege here conferred upon you, and thus turning it from a blessing into a curse. "Forsake not the guide of your youth; forget not the Covenant of your God." But under the constraining influence of that unmerited love, of which in Baptism you have received the token, give yourselves, heart and soul, to the fulfilment of the obligations that now, in consequence, belong to you.

We have seen that the Sacrament of Baptism, the reception of which has brought you under this peculiar responsibility, at once proclaims your lost state by nature, and exhibits the way of deliverance from its evils. Reminded here, then, of your natural corruption, and of the actual transgression, too, that continually proceeds from it, does it not become you to cherish that "godly sorrow which

worketh repentance," and, in the spirit of self-condemnation and self-abasement, to cry for a personal interest in pardoning mercy and regenerating grace. Directed here, likewise, to the blood of Christ as the appointed and accepted atonement for sin, and to the Spirit of Christ as engaged in overcoming the power and rooting out the pollution of sin, do you not find yourselves shut up to the necessity of committing your all for eternity to the efficacy of this precious blood, and to the work of this Holy Spirit? Beware, then, of despising the cross or quenching the Spirit of Christ. Casting aside all else as but "the refuge of lies," cling in faith and in gratitude to Jesus as your hope, your help, your chosen portion, your only Lord. And do not rest contented with the mere profession of such faith, or the mere feeling of such gratitude. That cannot be the faith into which the Lord's people are baptized which does not influence your conduct. Nor can your gratitude be that to which, as baptized persons, you are thus called, if it do not constrain you practically to honor Jesus.

Be careful, then, to manifest the sincerity of this believing and grateful acceptance of Christ, by walking in all his commandments and in all his ordinances blameless.—"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*" Spend it not in idleness or in worldliness or in amusement, but in the fear and worship of God. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." If you are really what, as baptized persons, you ought to be and profess to be, you will not, like many around you, regard the sanctuary as a place of gloomy devotion or uncomfortable restraint, to escape from which every plausible excuse is to be

gladly embraced. On the contrary, it will be your delight to seek there the spiritual improvement for which its solemn services are specially provided, and to enjoy there that communion with the Saviour and his people which is at once your privilege and your duty.—Give to *the preaching of the Gospel* your prayerful, serious, humble, self-applying attention. Seek at the throne of grace the preparation needed for the service. Make it your object to enter into the meaning and feel the power of what the Lord's servant may have to set before you. Beware of hearing with the indifference of those who "care for none of these things," or of setting yourselves to criticise rather than to be instructed, or of seeking to be entertained rather than to be edified. Listen not in the pride of the rebellious heart, which takes offence at the preacher's faithful dealing with the conscience and uncompromising enforcement of "the terrors of the Lord," no less than full exhibition of his mercy and his grace; but, with the meekness and teachableness of God's children, be ever ready to "receive the truth in the love of it, that ye may be saved." See, also, that you do not lose sight of your own particular concern in the ministration of the word. Be ever ready to take it home as bearing upon your own personal interests, and intended for your own personal guidance and benefit. O! that must be as useless, as it is manifestly a most sinful and profitless mode of waiting on a preached gospel, which finds the application of what is preached in every one around you sooner than yourselves.—*Value the Bible as your dearest treasure, and follow it as your surest guide.* It is provided to be "a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your path," in that heavenward jour-

ney on which, as baptized persons, you have entered. It is the divinely prepared chart by which alone you can steer your course with safety over the troubled sea of life, and escape the rocks and quicksands on which so many "have made shipwreck of the faith" into which they have been baptized. Read it daily; study it carefully; in all your difficulties refer to it; and yield to it a willing, conscientious, devoted obedience.—*Give yourselves likewise habitually to prayer.* If the spirit of prayer do not dwell in you—if the habit of prayer be not cultivated by you—then, of course, you must be strangers to all that the Sacrament of Baptism is intended to mark out for you and convey to you. To be without devotion is to be without Christ—destitute of all interest in his merits, all personal experience of his grace. In a word, to live without prayer is to render your Baptism useless, if not worse than useless, inasmuch as it must shut you out from every blessing of which Baptism is the sign and seal.

More particularly, *embrace without delay the opportunity of publicly acknowledging your baptismal dedication to God.* You can have nothing of that attachment to Christ which, as baptized persons, you must be supposed to profess and cherish, if you do not come to the Table of Communion, there to avow, in his own appointed way, before the world and under the eye of the Church, your Covenant relation to God.

What is it that keeps you from thus publicly recognizing your baptismal engagements? Perhaps it is the fear that you are *too young* to take a step so awfully important. Remember the promise of your heavenly Father—"I love them that love me,

and those that seek me *early* shall find me." And O! do not forget that your lives are as uncertain as they are short, and that the very next season of Communion, therefore, may be the last opportunity of thus publicly acknowledging your baptismal relation to Christ that shall ever come round to you.

Perhaps you are kept back by the conviction that you are *unprepared* for the service. Well, on what does this conviction rest? Is it that you are still strangers to converting grace?—too little devoted to Christ?—too much given to earthly pursuits and carnal enjoyments?—destitute, in short, of all sufficient evidence that, as "baptized into Christ," you have really "put on Christ?" Alas! if this be true, your case is very awful. To be thus unfit for the Lord's Table, is to be unfit for the kingdom of heaven. It distinctly proclaims you to be "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, without God, and without hope in the world." O! then, if you live thus, and die thus, WHAT IS TO BECOME OF YOU? But are you really serious in excusing yourselves on this ground from coming to the Communion Table? What a miserable delusion! Surely one sin will never justify another sin. You cannot be so ignorant or so simple as to fancy that your unbelief or your worldliness can remove or lessen the guilt of disobeying Christ's dying command. Instead, therefore, of making this a reason for standing back from the Lord's Supper, let it rather fill you with anxiety as to the state of your souls, and make you all the more in earnest about obtaining the reality of saving connexion with Jesus, so as to find yourselves qualified, not only to dis-

charge the duty, but to enjoy the privilege of ratifying, by your own act, at the Communion Table, what has been done for you by others at your Baptism.

It may be that you are abstaining from the Lord's Supper under the impression that, *so long as you do not formally take the baptismal vows upon yourselves, you are under no particular obligation to fulfil them;* and that, consequently, it is at least *safer* not to do so. There never was a greater mistake. We have seen that Baptism, as a seal of the Covenant set upon you, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"—a solemn deed, to which the unchanging One thus makes himself a party—has a binding power over you, independent of your own personal recognition of it. Your refusal to acknowledge it does not absolve you from the baptismal vow, cannot acquit you of guilt in neglecting it, will not save you from the consequences of disregarding it. The divine command to make this baptismal dedication of yourself unto God your own act, leaves you no choice, no discretion, with respect to it. Think of it what you please, the vows of the Lord are *already* upon you, and it lies not with you to cancel their authority. To disown your Baptism, therefore, whether directly or indirectly, must be at the peril of your soul. Withholding your assent to it, no matter how or when, you very obviously place yourselves among the number of those who are said to "forsake the covenant of the Lord, and draw back unto perdition."

Perhaps you are hindered from publicly acknowledging your Baptism by *the opposition or contempt or ridicule of those among whom your lot is cast,*

and with whom it is your desire to associate. O! what is this but just giving up Christ for the world —serving not God, but Mammon? It is pleasing the Devil, who waits for your destruction, rather than Jesus, who seeks your salvation. It is committing yourselves, in folly and in wickedness, to the despisers of your peace, and to "the enemies of the cross," who, though they may profess to honor you and perhaps smile upon you and flatter you, yet desire nothing more than to make you as careless and ungodly as themselves, and would rejoice in nothing so much as to carry you along with them to ruin. O! this is not the way to be happy here; certainly it is not the way to be safe for eternity. Remember the solemn language of our Lord—"Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Or, it may be, *you are shrinking from the difficulties of the Christian warfare.* Doubtless, these are as formidable as they are manifold. Painful, indeed, to flesh and blood must it ever be to "deny ourselves, and take up the cross daily and follow Jesus." Nor can we find it an easy matter at any time, as required by his own express command, to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without," and to "let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." But, dear young friends, you must not forget that if Baptism has been to you what it really is to every true believer, you are in posession of privileges, and have the assurance of blessings, far more than enough to counterbalance all the hardness which, as good soldiers of Jesus, you are called to endure. Nor

is it in your own strength that this warfare is to be maintained. Your Baptism, if believingly recognised, is the pledge for the fulfilment in your own experience of the Saviour's promise to protect his people from every danger, to comfort them amid every sorrow, to bear them in triumph over every obstacle that stands in their way. Do not hesitate, then, immediately to place yourselves under the banner of the cross, and go forth under that banner to "fight the good fight of faith," animated by the well-grounded assurance that you shall be "more than conquerors through Him that loved you."

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